

Information for prescribers

Updated information regarding pregnancy and use of carbamazepine

Medsafe recently issued a notice stating that the manufacturer of carbamazepine, Tegretol, have updated their data sheet regarding safety and use in pregnancy.

The following additional information was included in this update, indicating the risk of: Microcephaly; Small for gestational age (SGA); Neurodevelopmental disorders (Autism spectrum disorder, Intellectual disability, ADHD)

The data sheet advises that:

- Patients should be counselled regarding the possibility of an increased of malformations and given the opportunity of antenatal screening
- If women receiving carbamazepine become pregnant, or plan to become pregnant, or if the need of initiating treatment with carbamazepine arises during pregnancy, the drug's expected benefits must be carefully weighed against its possible hazards, particularly in the first three months of pregnancy, and specialist medical advice should be sought if indicated

Contraception with carbamazepine

Women of childbearing potential should use effective contraception during treatment with carbamazepine and for 2 weeks after the last dose. Due to enzyme induction, use may result in a failure of the therapeutic effect of hormonal contraceptive drugs containing oestrogen and/or progesterone. Women of child-bearing potential should be advised to use alternative contraceptive methods while on treatment with carbamazepine.

More information can be found here: [Control of the epilepsies - New Zealand Formulary](#) – section on “individuals of reproductive potential and pregnancy” and on Healthify: [Epilepsy and contraception | Healthify](#)

A resource suitable for both patients and healthcare providers has been developed by ACC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, FACS NZ (foetal anti-convulsant syndrome NZ) and the Health Quality and Safety Commission and can be found here: [Benefits and risks of taking anti-seizure medications for epilepsy, mental health, or pain](#)

References:

- Data sheet - [Data sheet - Tegretol](#)
- New Zealand Formulary – [Carbamazepine - New Zealand Formulary](#), [Control of the epilepsies - New Zealand Formulary](#)
- Prescriber Update - [Prescriber Update March 2025](#)