

What is Campral (Acamprosate calcium)?

Campral is a medication that decreases cravings for alcohol in people who have been dependent on alcohol and are trying to abstain. It is an addition to, not a substitute for, other forms of therapy aimed at helping your commitment and adjustment to life without alcohol. It is important that treatment with Campral includes some form of counselling.

What is alcohol dependence and how does Campral work?

Long-term and excessive consumption of alcohol can cause changes in the chemistry of certain brain cells. These changes make it harder for you to stop drinking and can result in the development of a dependence, or addiction, to alcohol. If you decide to stop drinking, you may find that certain situations will easily trigger a desire to drink. This urge to drink can last for many months after you have ceased drinking.

Campral works by restoring the chemical imbalance caused by long-term alcohol use. This helps to reduce your craving and need for alcohol and increase your chance of maintaining abstinence. Counselling will also help you develop ways of dealing with situations in which you may feel pressured to drink. Other support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) provide additional support to many people.

Successful treatment of alcohol dependence requires you to have some form of counselling while taking Campral. Counselling may be provided by a general practitioner (who has skills in counselling drug and alcohol patients), a psychiatrist, a psychologist or a drug and alcohol counsellor in your area.

When should I start taking Campral?

It is Important that you stop drinking before starting treatment with Campral. Campral is usually commenced once any withdrawal symptoms have subsided. This may take between 2 and 7 days. Campral is not a treatment for the "shakes" or other withdrawal discomfort you may experience when you stop drinking.

How long do the tablets take to work?

It may take a week before you begin to feel any effect from Campral, and sometimes up to a month.

Are there any side effects?

Any side effects that may occur tend to be mild and transient. Diarrhoea, and less frequently flatulence, nausea, vomiting and stomach pains occur in fewer than one in ten patients. Very rarely some people may experience an allergic skin reaction.

What will I feel taking these tablets?

Unless you experience any of the side effects listed above, you may not notice anything. Campral will not make you feel 'high' or sedated.

Can I take other medications if needed?

There are no known interactions with other medications. If necessary, Campral can be used with antidepressants, tranquillisers or disulfiram.

Taking Campral will not interfere with medication taken long term for illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure or peptic (stomach or duodenal) ulcers.

Will it be safe to drive?

Campral is not a sedative and normally there should be no interference with your ability to drive or operate machinery.

What happens if I take alcohol?

Treatment with Campral is intended to help you maintain abstinence from alcohol. However, Campral does not interact with alcohol and there will be no unpleasant reactions if you happen to drink alcohol while taking Campral. If something happens and you feel the need to have a drink, try to remember the skills you have learnt through counselling to stop you from drinking. If you are experiencing difficulties, make telephone contact with those who can assist you.

Even if you have a short relapse you should continue treatment with Campral at the normal dose.

Is Campral addictive?

You can stop taking Campral at any time without feeling symptoms of withdrawal from Campral. Campral is not habit forming or a drug of abuse.

What if I miss a dose?

Try to take your tablets regularly, three times a day, as directed. If you miss a dose, do not take extra tablets to make up for the dose you have missed. Take the next dose at the usual time.

Does anything happen if I stop abruptly?

You will not notice any sudden difference in the way you feel if you choose to stop taking Campral.

When should I take my Campral tablets?

It is recommended that you take Campral three times a day, with meals. If you have been prescribed 6 tablets a day, you should take 2 tablets morning, noon and night. If you have been prescribed 4 tablets a day, you should take 2 tablets in the morning, 1 at noon and 1 at night.

How long will I need to take Campral for?

The recovery of the brain cells from the effects of alcohol dependence can take many months and it may take at least 6 months to a year for you to develop a new lifestyle that does not include alcohol. During this period, occasions such as birthdays, weddings, Christmas and New Year may cause you to experience urges, or cravings, to drink alcohol. For this reason, it is recommended that Campral should be taken for 6 months to a year.

The information has been prepared to answer some of the common questions you may have about Campral.

If you have a concern about any medicine you are taking, you should always consult your doctor or pharmacist.