

Acamprosate (Campral)

Patient-client information

Campral is a medication that decreases cravings for alcohol in people who have been dependent on alcohol and are trying to abstain. It helps to reduce the chance of returning to drinking in people who have been dependent on alcohol. It does not cause you to be sick if you do drink.

What is alcohol dependence?

Heavy long-term consumption of alcohol can cause changes in the chemistry of the brain. These changes make it harder for you to stop drinking and can result in the development of a dependence or addiction to alcohol. Campral tablets work by restoring the chemical imbalance caused by long-term alcohol use. This helps to reduce the cravings and the need for alcohol, and increases your chance of not drinking.

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 settled down. This may take between two and seven days. Campral is not a treatment for the shakes or other withdrawal discomfort you may be experiencing when you stop drinking. If you experience symptoms such as the shakes, sleep problems and anxiety when you stop drinking, then you will need some specific treatment (other than Campral) for this before you start Campral. Speak with your doctor about it.

How long do the tablets take to work?

Campral takes about a week to work. These tablets are time-released, which means that small amounts of the drug is released over time. Because of this tablets should be swallowed whole and never crushed, cut or chewed. Campral is subsidised by the government Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), and is available on prescription from a doctor (cost is approximately \$6.60/month for health care card holders and \$41/month without concession).

Are there side effects?

Side effects that may occur tend to be mild and short-lived. The main side effects are diarrhoea, occasional headache and some nausea.

How 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?

Campral is not known to interact with other medications. If necessary, Campral can be used with other medications such as antidepressants, naltrexone, sedatives or Antabuse. It should not be taken by pregnant or breastfeeding women, or people who have severe kidney or liver disease.

Will it be safe to drive?

Campral is not a sedative and normally should not interfere with your ability to drive or operate machinery.

What happens if I consume alcohol?

Treatment with Campral is intended to help you stay off alcohol. However, Campral does not interact with alcohol and there will be no unpleasant reactions if you drink alcohol. Even if you have a short relapse, you should continue treatment with Campral at the normal dose.

What is a normal dose?

It is recommended you take Campral three times a day with meals. If you have been prescribed six tablets a day, you should take two tablets in the morning, two tablets at midday and two tablets at night. If you have been prescribed four tablets a day you should take two tablets in the morning, one tablet at midday and one tablet at night.

For how long will I need to take Campral?

The recovery of the brain cells from the effects of alcohol can take many months and it may take six months to a year for you to develop a new lifestyle that does not include alcohol. Successful treatment of alcohol dependence requires you to have some form of counselling while taking Campral. Counselling may be through your GP via a Mental Health Care plan, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a Drug and Alcohol specialist, or through Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia. Alcoholics Anonymous offers additional support in group settings.

For more information

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
Phone: 1300 13 1340
Confidential telephone counselling and information available between 8.30am and 10pm every day.
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/dassa

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