



What is this medication used for?

Acamprosate is approved by Health Canada for adults to maintain not using any alcohol (alcohol abstinence). It is intended for those who have a history of alcohol use, but are not using alcohol when starting this medication.

Acamprosate is not approved by Health Canada for use in children and adolescents. However, when potential benefits outweigh risks, acamprosate may be prescribed "off-label." Learn more about off-label medication use:



<http://bit.ly/KMH-off-label-use>

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you:

- Have allergies or bad reactions to a medication
- Take (or plan to take) other prescription or non-prescription medications, including natural medicines. Some medications interact with acamprosate. Your doctor may adjust medication doses or monitor for side effects
- Have a history of kidney disease or seizures
- Miss a menstrual period, are pregnant, breast-feeding or planning a pregnancy
- Use alcohol or drugs. Taking acamprosate together with certain substances may cause a bad reaction. Learn more at www.DrugCocktails.ca



When will the medication start to work?

It may take several days to a week for acamprosate to take full effect. After taking acamprosate for several days you may notice that you have decreased cravings and urges to use alcohol.

Talk with your doctor if you feel that acamprosate has not been helpful or if side effects are too bothersome. Your doctor may recommend switching you to a different medication.



Possible common or serious side effects:

Side effects may be more common when starting a medication or after a dose increase. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if any side effect concerns you.

- Weakness, nervousness or difficulty sleeping
- Prickling or tingling sensation
- Itchy skin or dry mouth
- Abdominal pain, diarrhea, gas, nausea or vomiting
- Changes in appetite, weight gain or loss
- For adolescents/adults: changes in sexual performance or interest



**This medication is not addictive.
Do not stop taking it before
talking to your doctor.**

Contact your doctor immediately if you experience:

- Unexplained rash
- Chest pain, irregular heartbeat or uncomfortable awareness of your heartbeat
- Joint pain
- Mood or behavioural changes
- Thoughts of hurting yourself, suicide, increased hostility or worsening symptoms



How do I take this medication?

Acamprosate is usually taken three times daily, at the same times each day. It can be taken with or without food. Treatment should be started immediately after you stop using alcohol and should be maintained even if you start using alcohol again afterwards.

Acamprosate is available as a delayed release tablet, which should be swallowed whole with fluids. Do not crush, chew or divide tablets.



What precautions should my doctor and I be aware of when taking this medication?

- While taking this medication, if you feel dizzy, drowsy or slowed down, do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery. Alcohol could make this worse. Do not consume alcohol while taking acamprosate.
- Attending counselling (as recommended by your doctor) helps to increase the likelihood this medication will help you continue to avoid using alcohol.



How do I store this medication?

Keep this medication in the original container, stored at room temperature away from moisture and heat and protected from light. Keep this medication out of reach and sight of children.



How does this medication work?

Acamprosate affects the balance of activities of brain chemicals GABA and glutamate, which appear to be disrupted and are not functioning properly in people with alcohol use disorder. The exact way acamprosate helps people continue to avoid using alcohol is not fully known.



How well does the medication work in children and adolescents?

Acamprosate has been studied in adolescents with alcohol dependence, and showed higher rates of not using alcohol compared with those receiving a placebo (an inactive pill). Anti-craving medications such as acamprosate are most effective among people who take the medication as prescribed by their doctor. Limited evidence supports acamprosate use in adolescents and it should be used after failure of other treatment options. Whenever possible, adding cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and counselling to acamprosate may increase the chance for benefit.



How long should I take the medication for?

This depends on your risk of using alcohol after starting treatment with acamprosate. Your doctor will discuss the benefits and risks of taking acamprosate with you. At this time, you can also discuss how long you might need to take this medication.

Most people will need to take acamprosate for at least 90 days, with additional “booster” sessions afterwards to reduce the chance of experiencing cravings or urges to use alcohol. For people who start using alcohol again, treatment may be restarted in addition to counselling.

Do not increase, decrease, or stop taking this medication without discussing it with your doctor. If you stop taking acamprosate suddenly, it is possible that you may have increased urges to use alcohol, experience a seizure or have a bad reaction.



What special instructions should I follow while using this medication?

- Keep all your appointments with your doctor. Your doctor will monitor side effects and your response to this medication.
- Try to keep a healthy, well-balanced diet and exercise regularly.
- Do not allow anyone else to use your medication.



What should I do if I forget to take a dose of this medication?

If you forget to take a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is within 4 hours of your next scheduled dose, skip the missed dose and continue with your regular schedule. DO NOT double your next dose to try to ‘catch up’.