

Acamprosate

Campral (brand discontinued in the US; generics available), a medicine that helps your brain settle after you stop drinking

Acamprosate helps quiet the restless, edgy, sleepless feeling that pulls people back to drinking after they stop.

WHAT IT TREATS

Alcohol use disorder

HOW YOU TAKE IT

3 times a day, with meals

WHEN IT WORKS

Days to a few weeks

HABIT FORMING

No

✔ This medicine carries **no special FDA safety warning** of that kind.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Acamprosate** helps rebalance brain signals that stay stirred up for months after heavy drinking stops.
- It is meant to help you stay stopped, not to help you stop. It works best once you have already gone a few days without alcohol.
- This treats a medical condition. Needing medicine for it says nothing about your character, only about your biology.
- It is not habit forming, causes no high, and is gentle on the liver, which matters if your liver has taken a hit.

② HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it three times a day, usually with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Tying it to meals is the easiest way to remember.
- Swallow the tablets whole with water. Do not crush, split, or chew them, because the coating protects your stomach.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If your next one is close, skip the missed one and carry on.
- It is usually started a few days after your last drink, once withdrawal has passed. Your prescriber will time this.
- Keep taking it even on good weeks. It works by being steady in your body, not by being taken when cravings hit.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Many people notice the edgy, restless, sleepless feeling easing over the first few weeks rather than overnight.
- It does not cause a reaction if you drink. If a slip happens, keep taking it, and tell your prescriber what happened.
- It works best alongside counseling, a group, or both. The medicine lowers the pull, and the rest builds the new habits.
- Working looks like fewer nights spent fighting the urge, steadier sleep, and days where alcohol takes up less headspace.
- It is often taken for **a year or more**. Staying on a treatment that is holding is a success, not a failure.

♥ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Loose stools or diarrhea is the most common effect. It usually eases within a couple of weeks, and food with each dose helps.
- If diarrhea is stubborn, keep fluids up and ask a pharmacist before buying anything for it, rather than stopping the medicine.
- Gas, bloating, or belly discomfort can happen early on. Smaller, more regular meals usually settle it.
- Nausea and a poor appetite are common at first and generally fade as your body gets used to the medicine.
- Feeling itchy, sweaty, or having a mild rash sometimes happens. Tell your prescriber if a rash spreads or blisters.
- Low mood or trouble sleeping can appear early. Both are common after stopping drinking, and both are treatable.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Call **988** if thoughts of ending your life show up. Help is free and it works.
- Call **911** for face, lip, or throat swelling, or for sudden trouble breathing.
- Call your prescriber for diarrhea that lasts more than a week or leaves you weak.
- Call your prescriber for a rash that spreads, blisters, or peels.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Tell your prescriber about any kidney trouble. Your kidneys clear this medicine, so the amount may need to be lower.
- This will not protect you from the health harms of drinking. It lowers the pull, but alcohol still does its damage.
- If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to be, discuss it. There are safer paths and a plan can be made.
- Do not skip doses to save money. Ask about generic pricing or assistance programs before you cut back on your own.
- It does not interact with most medicines, but a pharmacist should still see your full list once.

⏸️ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- There is no withdrawal from this medicine and nothing to come off of slowly, but talk before you stop.
- The urge to drink often returns weeks after stopping, so a plan matters more than the last tablet.
- If the three-times-a-day schedule is the problem, ask about other options rather than quitting treatment.
- For free, confidential support any hour of the day, call SAMHSA at **1-800-662-4357**.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How long after my last drink should I start this medicine?
- Do my kidneys change the amount that is right for me?
- What should I do if I drink while I am taking this?
- Is there anything easier than three times a day for me?

Where this information comes from

MedlinePlus. (2023). *Acamprosate*. National Library of Medicine. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a604028.html>

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NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.