

Campral

Campral, also known as acamprosate, is indicated for the treatment of alcohol addiction. It helps in stabilizing the chemical balance in the brain, which perhaps gets disturbed due to alcohol abuse. Manufactured by Merck in France, acamprosate is marketed under the brand name Campral. Apart from alcohol, it is not used for any other type of substance dependence.

Campral helps people in stopping their urge to consume alcohol again after they have already stopped drinking alcohol. You should have left alcohol consumption completely before taking Campral to ensure its effectiveness. One should be prepared for alcohol treatment plan, including mental and behavioural health counselling, as research signifies that when the Campral treatment is combined with attending social support groups is it most effective.

Description and mechanism of action

Acamprosate restores and regulates the balance of brain by blocking glutamatergic N-methyl-D-aspartate receptors and renders active gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) type A receptors.

Glutamate is a type of amino acid and is used by the nervous system as a vital messenger substance. The receiving neuron's cell membrane has NMDA receptors, which binds the incoming glutamate resulting in an overflow of sodium and calcium ions inside the neuron that stimulates the cell by triggering an action potential.

The fastening of glutamate to NMDA receptors is stopped by alcohol, which in turn slows down or prevents the message transfer. Consequently, the number of receptors and its sensitivity is increased in the brain of people who consume alcohol excessively to enhance the chance of binding glutamate. At the time of abstinence or even while most dependent alcoholics sleep in a night, when the alcohol supply is prevented, the receptors continues to be excessively sensitive. This is because the brain is not able to adjust in the new chemical situation and the neurons overreact to glutamate. Due to this hyper excitatory condition, person experiences withdrawal symptoms like strong urge, unstable blood circulation and anxiety. This excessive activity might even destroy numerous neurons by poisoning them with excessive chemicals, which may lead to dementia or permanent damage of the nervous system.

Acamprosate repress NMDA receptors and helps people to deal with the first most difficult months of abstinence, when relapse rates are considered to be the highest.

Dosage

Campral can be consumed empty stomach or along with food, but it is best to take it with meals as it helps in keeping you regular with the medicine. Even if you have a relapse, then also you should keep on consuming Campral on regular basis. In case you miss a dose, then you should take it as soon as you remember. However, you may skip one dose if it is the time of the next dosage, as you should not take two doses at a time.

You can start by taking two tablets of 33 mg each three times a day. People who do not have severe kidney problems might take half of the regular dose. However, always consult the doctor before taking it.

Overdose of Campral might lead to diarrhoea and other symptoms.

Side effects

Administering Campral might entail certain severe side effects like allergy, heart arrhythmia, kidney failure, sudden death, hypotension or hypertension and suicidal thinking or suicide attempt.

Besides, a person might experience some other side effects such as headaches, insomnia, impotence, anxiety, body pain or weakness, chest pain, depression, diarrhoea, dizziness, heart failure, irregular heartbeat, nausea and seizure. You should consult a doctor if you develop any side effects or experience a change in intensity.

Cautions

If you are having kidney problems or allergies to the medicines, then you should not take acamprosate.

Given that alcohol dependence and mental health problems are closely related, you or your caregiver should carefully observe your condition attention and if you notice increase in depression or any new symptoms like agitation, hostility, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts or behaviour while taking Campral, then you should immediately consult your doctor.

This drug might hamper your judgment, thinking, or motor skills, therefore is it advised that you do not operate dangerous machinery, drive, or take part in dangerous activities until you are sure that you are not experiencing such effects.

Interactions

There is no sufficient data to prove any drug interactions with Campral. However, pregnant women, nursing mothers and people with kidney and allergy problems should consult the doctor before administering this drug. One should also consult the doctor before taking any other over-the-counter drugs and vitamins supplements.