

Acamprosate

| Background Information | Acamprosate is thought to reduce drinking by modulating the brain glutamate function implicated in withdrawal symptoms. The response to this in vivo is that it suppresses the urge to drink in response to learned cues. It is therefore often referred to as the “anti-craving” drug. It is licensed for use in maintaining abstinence in alcohol dependent patients. It is most effective when prescribed as part of a psychosocial treatment package. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| BNF therapeutic class | 4.10. Drugs used in substance dependence https://doi.org/10.18578/BNF.871371846 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indication | Maintenance of abstinence in alcohol dependence | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dosage and administration | <p>The dose is dependent on the patients' weight: Patients >60kg should take 333mg x 2, three times a day (total 6 tablets) Patients < 60kg should take 333mg x four per day divided throughout the day (total 4 tablets)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The recommended treatment period is 12 months and should only be continued for longer following liaison with specialist services.• The treatment can be stopped abruptly although many patients prefer to reduce slowly as it gives them more confidence.• If a patient has a lapse it may be worth continuing the treatment for a while (e.g. 4 - 6 weeks) as they may re-achieve abstinence. The acamprosate will still be present in the body and levels will not have dropped. If it is clear the patient is not going to re-achieve abstinence the acamprosate should be withdrawn. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cautions and Contraindications | <p>Cautions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued alcohol use <p>Contraindications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severe hepatic failure e.g. a combination of the following symptoms - ascites, bilirubin > 51, prolonged prothrombin time• Renal failure – avoid if serum creatinine greater than 120 micromol/litre• Pregnancy or breastfeeding | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adverse Drug Reactions | <p>These are usually mild and transient. The most common are gastro-intestinal symptoms.</p> <table><tr><th>Side Effect</th><th>Suggested Action</th></tr><tr><td>Abdominal pain/cramps</td><td>Should cease, if severe or persistent discuss</td></tr><tr><td>Nausea/vomiting</td><td>Take after food</td></tr><tr><td>Diarrhoea</td><td>Keep hydrated, if severe discuss and consider discontinuation</td></tr><tr><td>Mood changes/irritability</td><td>Discuss</td></tr><tr><td>Skin rash/pruritus</td><td>Discontinue until seen by a doctor</td></tr><tr><td>Sexual dysfunction</td><td>Discuss</td></tr></table> | | Side Effect | Suggested Action | Abdominal pain/cramps | Should cease, if severe or persistent discuss | Nausea/vomiting | Take after food | Diarrhoea | Keep hydrated, if severe discuss and consider discontinuation | Mood changes/irritability | Discuss | Skin rash/pruritus | Discontinue until seen by a doctor | Sexual dysfunction | Discuss |
| Side Effect | Suggested Action | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Amber with Guidance= To be initiated and titrated to a stable dose in secondary care with follow up prescribing and monitoring by primary care where deemed appropriate.

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| Monitoring | <p>Initiation should be by specialist services (Substance Misuse Team or Shared Care GP practices). There are no specific recommendations regarding monitoring of LFTs, however, it may be prudent to check them every 6 months.</p> <p>Patients should be monitored for abstinence at least monthly for 6 months, less frequently if continued on treatment after 6 months.</p> <p>Because the interrelationship between alcohol dependence, depression and suicidality is well-recognised and complex, it is recommended that alcohol-dependent patients, including those treated with acamprosate, be monitored for such symptoms.</p> |
| Interactions | None reported. Acamprosate does not interact with alcohol. |

Contact names and details

| Contact Details | Telephone number | Email |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Dr Fleur Ashby Consultant Clinical Director, Barnsley Recovery Steps | 01226 779066 | Amanda.Ashby@humankindcharity.org.uk |
| Chris Lawson, Head of Medicines Management, NHS Barnsley CCG | 01226 433798 | chris.lawson@nhs.net |

References

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- Acamprosate (Campral®). Summary of Product Characteristics. October 2019. Available at: <http://www.medicines.org.uk/EMC/medicine/1042/SPC/Campral+EC/> Accessed: 12.08.20
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- Choice and Medication website (information about mental health conditions, treatments and medications). Available at: <https://www.choiceandmedication.org/humankind/>

This guidance was approved at the APC on 14th October 2020.