



# Patient and Caregiver Information on Buspirone

Buspirone is an anti-anxiety drug (anxiolytic).

## What is this drug used for?

Buspirone is used to **treat symptoms of chronic anxiety**. Anxiety is a normal human response to stress and is considered necessary for effective functioning and coping with daily activities. It may, however, be a symptom of many other disorders, both medical and psychiatric. There are many different types of anxiety and there are many different approaches to treating it.

Though not approved for these indications, buspirone has also been found effective in other conditions, including posttraumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, body dysmorphic disorder, agitation, irritability, aggression, and antisocial behavior, and as an aid in smoking cessation and alcohol withdrawal. It has been used alone or in combination with antidepressants in the treatment of depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Ask your doctor if you are not sure why you are taking this drug.

**Note:** This medication may not have formal approval by regulatory agencies such as Health Canada or the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children or adolescents for some or all of the above uses.

## How quickly will the drug start working?

Buspirone causes a gradual improvement in symptoms of anxiety and can reduce agitation and induce calm usually within 1–2 weeks. The maximum effect is seen after 3–4 weeks. Improvement in symptoms of other disorders for which buspirone may be prescribed occur gradually over several weeks.

## How long should you take this medication?

This depends on what type of illness you have and how well you do. Anxiety is usually self-limiting; often when the cause of anxiety is treated or eliminated, symptoms of anxiety will decrease.

Therefore, anxiolytics are usually prescribed for a limited period of time. To maintain effectiveness, buspirone cannot be taken only when needed (during periods of excessive stress), but needs to be taken on a daily basis. Your doctor may try to reduce the dose of this drug to see if the anxiety symptoms return; if not, the dosage may be further reduced and you may be advised to stop using this medication. **Do not increase the dose or stop the drug without consulting with your doctor.**

Some patients need to use an anxiolytic drug for longer time periods because of the type of anxiety they may be experiencing. Long-term treatment is generally recommended for certain other indications such as social anxiety disorder, body dysmorphic disorder or antisocial behavior.

## What side effects may happen?

Side effects may happen with any drug. They are not usually serious and do not happen to everyone. Side effects may sometimes occur before beneficial effects of the medication are noticed. If you think you may be having a side effect, speak to your doctor or pharmacist as they can help you decrease it or cope with it.

**Common** side effects that should be reported to your doctor at the **NEXT VISIT** include:

- Feeling sleepy and tired – this problem goes away with time or when the dose is reduced. Avoid driving a car or operating machinery if drowsiness persists.
- Headache – tends to be temporary and can be managed by taking a pain reliever (e.g., acetaminophen or ibuprofen) when required.
- Nausea or heartburn – if this happens, take the medication with food.
- Dizziness, lightheadedness – sit or lie down; if symptoms persist, contact your doctor.
- Energized/agitated feeling – some individuals may feel nervous for a few days after starting this medication. Report this to your doctor.
- Tingling or numbing in fingers or toes – report this to your doctor.

**Less common** side effects that you should report to your doctor **RIGHT AWAY** include:

- Severe agitation, excitement, or any changes in behavior

Let your doctor know **right away** if you miss your period or think you may be **pregnant**, plan to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

## What should you do if you forget to take a dose of your medication?

If you take your total dose of buspirone at bedtime and you forget to take your medication, skip the missed dose and continue with your schedule the next day. **DO NOT DOUBLE THE DOSE.** If you take the drug several times a day, take the missed dose when you remember, then continue with your regular schedule.

## Is this drug safe to take with other medication?

**Because this drug can change the effect of other medication, or may be affected by other medication, always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking other drugs, including those you can buy without a prescription such as cold remedies and herbal preparations. Always inform any doctor or dentist that you see that you are taking this drug.**

### **What else do I need to know about buspirone?**

1. Do not increase your dose without consulting your doctor.
2. Take your medication at the same time each day in relation to your meals (i.e., always with or without food).
3. Take your medication with water, milk orange or apple juice. Avoid grapefruit juice as it may change the amount of the drug in your body.
4. Drinking a lot of caffeine (coffee, tea, caffeine-containing soft drinks, etc.) can cause you to become easily upset or jittery and make it harder for this drug to work.
5. This drug may increase the effects of alcohol, making you more sleepy, dizzy, and lightheaded. If taken together with alcohol, this may make it dangerous for you to drive, operate machinery, or perform tasks that require careful attention.
6. Store your medication in a clean, dry area at room temperature. Keep all medication out of the reach of children.

**If you have any questions regarding this medication, please ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.**