

Buspirone (pron. bus-pier-own or bew-spire-own)

What is buspirone used for?

Buspirone (also known as Buspar[®]) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of anxiety. It is made as tablets.

What is the usual dose of buspirone?

The usual dose of buspirone is around 10mg three times a day, although it will take a month or so to work up to this dose. It does not work if you only take it just when you feel anxious. Start at 5mg two or three times a day, then build up every few days or so depending how you feel. It may take a month or so to get to the full dose.

How should I take buspirone?

Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.

When should I take buspirone?

Take your buspirone as directed on the medicine label. Try to take it at regular times each day. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking buspirone with or after food. When you start buspirone, you should build up to the full dose over several weeks.

What are the alternatives to buspirone?

There are many other medicines (e.g. SSRIs), talking therapies and treatments for anxiety. See our "Handy chart" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will buspirone take to work?

You must give buspirone at least 4 weeks at the full dose before it will work properly.

How long will I need to keep taking buspirone for?

You may need to take buspirone for several months or maybe even years to help stop the symptoms coming back.

Is buspirone addictive?

Buspirone is not addictive. No dependence or addiction has been reported.

Can I stop taking buspirone suddenly?

It is unwise to stop taking it suddenly, even if you feel better. Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after buspirone has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw buspirone by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks. You should discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

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

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 3-4 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects. If you have problems remembering your doses (as many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs, boxes and devices that can be used to help you remember.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking buspirone?

If you drink alcohol while taking buspirone it may make you feel more sleepy. This is particularly important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

Will buspirone affect my other medication?

Buspirone has a few interactions with other medicines:

- Buspirone should not be taken with MAOIs (e.g. phenelzine, isocarboxazid, tranylcypromine, for depression)
- The effects of buspirone can sometimes be increased by calcium-channel blockers (e.g. verapamil, diltiazem) and some medicines for infections (e.g. erythromycin, itraconazole)
- The effect of buspirone can be decreased by rifampicin

- Drinking lots of grapefruit juice can increase the effects of buspirone
- You should have no problems with "The contraceptive Pill" and buspirone.

Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking buspirone?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from buspirone.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (less than about 1 in 10 people might get these)		
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
Anxiety	Feeling more anxious, nervous or excitable	This should wear off. If not, mention it to your doctor next time you meet.
Nausea	Feeling sick.	If it is bad, contact your doctor.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie or sit down if you feel it coming on. Don't drive.
Depersonalisation	Feeling odd, disconnected, spaced out	This is common if you increase your dose too quickly. You can drop your dose a little and not increase the dose too quickly.
UNCOMMON (less than about 1 in 100 people might get these)		
Sleepiness	You feel sleepy or sluggish. It can last for a few hours after taking your dose, or longer.	Don't drive or use machinery.
RARE (less than about 1 in 100 people might get these)		
Tachycardia or palpitations	A fast heart beat.	See your doctor. It can be treated if it lasts for a long time.
Fatigue	You feel tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting buspirone, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly.
Sweating	Feeling hot and sticky. Your clothes may get wet.	Contact your doctor. You may need to have your blood pressure checked.
Confusion	Your mind is all mixed up or confused.	Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her. He or she may want to adjust your drug or dose.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

Will I need a blood test if I am taking buspirone?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking buspirone.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking buspirone?

You may feel a bit sleepy at first when taking buspirone. Until this wears off, or you know how buspirone affects you, do not drive or operate machinery. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.