

Bupropion (pron. bew-pro-pea-on)

What is bupropion used for?

Bupropion (also known by its trade name Zyban[®]) is usually used to help people stop smoking, but can be used to help treat the symptoms of depression. It can be useful for bipolar depression, where it may have less chance of switching you into mania. It is available as tablets.

What is the usual dose of bupropion?

The usual dose of bupropion is around 300mg a day for depression.

How should I take bupropion?

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 bupropion?

Take your bupropion 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 bupropion with or after food.

What are the alternatives to bupropion?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. There are many other medicines (e.g. SSRIs), therapies and treatments for depression. See our "Handy chart" to help you compare the medicines for depression, how they work and their side effects.

How long will bupropion take to work?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. For depression, the effect will start in a week or two, and carry on building for the next few weeks. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

How long will I need to keep taking bupropion for?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. Please see one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice on how long you might need to take it for.

Is bupropion addictive?

Bupropion is not addictive.

Can I stop taking bupropion 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 bupropion has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw bupropion 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 bupropion?

Start again as soon as you remember if within about 6 hours. After this just take the next dose as normal. You **must 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 very 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.

Will bupropion affect my other medication?

Bupropion should be used with care with any drugs that might increase your chances of having a fit or seizure. This includes antipsychotics, some antidepressants, antimalarials, tramadol, theophylline, steroids, some antihistamines and some antibiotics.

- Bupropion can increase the effects of some antidepressants (e.g. imipramine, paroxetine), some antipsychotics (e.g. risperidone), beta-blockers (e.g. metoprolol) and some other heart drugs.
- The effect of bupropion can be decreased by ritonavir or Kaletra[®]
- You should have no problems with "The contraceptive Pill" and bupropion.

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.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking bupropion?

If you drink alcohol while taking bupropion 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. Also, lots of alcohol can increase your chances of getting fits or seizures.

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

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

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
VERY COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Insomnia	Not being able to fall asleep at night	Discuss this with your doctor. Take your last dose no later than at teatime.
COMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Urticaria	Red blotchy skin, itches, rash	You may need to stop bupropion if this happens, and even then it might take a week or so to go. Some people manage OK with antihistamines or steroids.
Gastro-intestinal upset	Dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, constipation	Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereal or fruit. Make sure you are drinking enough fluid. Make sure you keep active and get some pharmacist e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative. Sometimes taking the tablets with food helps.
Agitation and anxiety	Feeling wound up and having lots of worries	You might need to stop bupropion if this happens.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Anorexia	Not feeling hungry	Discuss with your doctor.
Confusion	Being mixed up or muddled	Discuss with your doctor.
Visual disturbances		Discuss with your doctor.
Cardiac effects	Tachycardia (a faster heart beat) or hypertension	Tell your doctor about it as soon as you can in the next few days. Your dose might need to be changed.
RARE (<i>less than about 1 in 1000 people might get these</i>)		
Seizures	Fits or convulsions	Stop bupropion and see a doctor as soon as possible i.e. right away, don't delay. It is more common at does above about 350mg a day.

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 bupropion?

You should not need a blood test while taking bupropion.

Can I drive while I am taking bupropion?

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

Prepared for you by Choice and Medication

This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. It is not a manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet. You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.