

Brexpiprazole

Brexpiprazole (Rexulti) can help depression, anxiety, agitation, paranoia, and hallucinations. It belongs to a class of medications called the atypical antipsychotics, which differ widely in their side effects and benefits. Sometimes these medications are difficult to tolerate, but brexpiprazole is among the better tolerated options in this group.

Brexpiprazole treats schizophrenia (a disorder that causes paranoid thinking or hallucinations). It also treats post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) when used with an antidepressant. It does this through a unique mechanism that helps the brain heal from traumatic memories.

Brexpiprazole can take up to 2-3 weeks to work fully but can bring benefits after a few days.

How should I take it?

It can be taken all at once or divided twice per day (either method will work; you should choose which is most convenient or best tolerated for you). Brexpiprazole's benefits build up gradually in the brain and are not impacted by the time of day you take it. If it makes you feel groggy you should take it at night.

It's a good idea to link the time you take brexpiprazole with a daily routine that you already have in place. Think of things you never go a day without, such as brushing your teeth, showering or a morning cup of coffee. Store your medication close to that routine and take it at the same time so you can build on habits you've already developed.

What if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next

dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

Key Points

1. Brexpiprazole can be taken day or night.
2. Coupons are available at www.rexulti.com.
3. There are several rare, but serious, side effects with this medication (diabetes, high cholesterol, tardive dyskinesia, and compulsive gambling/spending).
4. Lower those risks by checking weight before and after starting it and using the app tdscreen.ai (see inside).

How long do I need to take it?

This depends on your diagnosis and which other medications you are taking. Most people with bipolar disorder need to stay on at least one mood stabilizer for the long term in order to prevent mood swings. If brexpiprazole helped, it is best to stay on it for at least 6 months before considering going off it. That gives the brain time to build up habits of stability.

What happens if I stop it?

Brexpiprazole is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms. If you plan to come off brexpiprazole, it is best to do so slowly (over at least 2 weeks) as that will lower the chance of sudden mood swings returning.

Checking labs

It is a good idea to check for diabetes and high cholesterol while taking brexpiprazole. This medication, as well as bipolar disorder itself, increases the risk of these conditions.

Side effects

Brexpiprazole is generally well tolerated. Weight gain and tiredness are rare. The most common side effects are nausea and an uncomfortable restless feeling called *akathisia*.

If you don't tolerate the medication, try cutting your dose in half until the side effects get better and then raising it up.

These side effects tend to improve with time or by lowering the dose:

Nausea, tiredness, restlessness, muscle aches or stiffness.

Preventing weight gain

We can prevent weight gain on this med if we know that you're at risk. Here's how to tell. Weigh yourself carefully before starting it and again one month later (use the same scale, check in morning, naked, before eating and after going to the bathroom).

If you gain weight in the first month, there are several options to prevent the problem. As a first step, here is a nutrition plan that improves mood, causes weight loss, and has no calorie counting:

www.chrisaikenmd.com/antidepressantdiet

Medical risks

Compulsive gambling: Rarely, brexpiprazole increases the urge to gamble or spend money.

Low blood pressure: brexpiprazole can cause blood pressure to drop when you stand up (leading to dizziness or falls). You can reduce this risk by standing up slowly.

Elevations of prolactin hormone: this can cause menstrual irregularities and breast milk secretion. We may need to stop brexpiprazole or use treatments to lower prolactin if this occurs.

Metabolic Changes: Brexpiprazole can increase the risk of diabetes and high cholesterol.

Tardive Dyskinesia: With long term use, this med may cause involuntary movements, such as twitching in the face, hands, or other muscles.

This condition can be treated but sometimes it is not reversible. We will check for movements while you are on it, and you can prevent it further by using the tdcheck.ai app every few months. It detects early signs of the problem better than doctors.

Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome: This syndrome, which is extremely rare on brexpiprazole, consists of sudden, severe muscle stiffness, fever and irregular pulse and blood pressure.

Use in Dementia: Although it is FDA-approved

Akathisia

This side effect is a feeling of inner restlessness that makes it very uncomfortable to sit still. It is not dangerous and may improve with time or a lower dose.

Akathisia can be relieved with several medications including propranolol, vitamin B6, betaxolol, pramipexole, gabapentin, trazodone, and mirtazapine.

for behavioral problems in dementia, brexpiprazole can increase the risk of death when used in older adults with dementia. This effect is not seen in people without dementia and may be related to brain-changes that dementia brings.

Pregnancy: Brexpiprazole has not been adequately studied in pregnancy. It does pass through breast milk.

Interactions

Recreational drugs: Alcohol (in excess of 2 glasses/day) and recreational drugs can prevent brexpiprazole from working.

Grapefruit juice can raise brexpiprazole levels.

Other medications: These web sites help you check for drug interactions. You should talk with us about the information you find as many

drug interactions have only a mild effect:
reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker

How to store and dispose of medication

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat, direct light and damp places.
- To safely dispose of unwanted pills: Do not pour in the toilet or sink (it will enter the water supply). To prevent children or pets from eating it, mix unwanted pills in a bag with water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds) and throw in the garbage.

Cost and insurance coverage

Brexpiprazole is brand only. Coupons are available at www.rexulti.com. If you are paying out of pocket, you will find the lowest cost at www.GoodRx.com.

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/26/2025

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Brand	Rexulti
Dose range	0.25-4 mg/day
Sizes	Tabs: 0.25, 0.5, 1, 2, 3, 4mg
Release date	In 2015
FDA-approval	Major depression, schizophrenia, psychosis or agitation in dementia