

# Buspirone

Buspirone is unique among psychiatric medications in that it treats anxiety but is not an antidepressant (like the SSRIs) and is not addictive (like the benzodiazepines).

Buspirone can also reduce sexual side effects of serotonin antidepressants such as SSRIs. It may improve anxious depression, irritability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), premenstrual dysphoria, teeth grinding (bruxism).

## How it works

Buspirone enhances serotonin transmission at the 5-HT<sub>1A</sub> receptor, which is different from the serotonin receptors that SSRI antidepressants act on.

## How should I take it?

Buspirone is best divided two to three times per day, with or without food. It can also be taken on an as-needed basis for anxiety.

## 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.

## How long do I need to take it?

How long you take buspirone will depend on the reason you started it.

## What happens if I stop it?

Buspirone is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms.

## Side effects

Buspirone is generally well tolerated and does not cause weight gain, concentration problems or sexual side effects.

*These side effects tend to improve with time (approx 1 week) or by lowering the dose:*  
Headaches, dizziness, and drowsiness.

*Pregnancy:* Buspirone has not been adequately evaluated during pregnancy.

## Overdose

Overdose with buspirone is not lethal but may cause side effects.

## Interactions

Grapefruit can increase levels of buspirone. Buspirone should not be taken with MAOI antidepressants. It does not interact with over-the-counter medications and has few other drug interactions. The web sites below 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](http://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 a little water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds or kitty litter) and throw in the trash.

## Cost and insurance coverage

Buspirone is available in generic form. If you are paying out-of-pocket, the lowest cost is usually found at GoodRx.com or Costco (you do not need to be a member to use their pharmacy).

## **Buspirone**

Brands	Buspar
Dose range	15-60mg/day
Sizes	Tabs: 5, 7.5, 15, 30mg
Release date	9/29/1986
FDA-approval	Anxiety

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/26/2025