

Patient Information on Bupropion

(Wellbutrin SR®, Wellbutrin XL®, Zyban®, generic brands)

What is this medication used for?

This medication belongs to the class of medications called selective norepinephrine dopamine reuptake inhibitors (NDRI) antidepressants. The most common conditions they are used for are:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Depression (Major Depressive Disorder or depression associated with Bipolar Disorder)
- Smoking Cessation

Bupropion may be used alone or in combination with other medications for other conditions like anxiety disorders; ask your doctor if you are unsure why you are taking this medication.

Bupropion is taken once or twice a day. The “Zyban” or “SR” (sustained-release) tablets may be taken once or twice a day. If you take bupropion twice a day, separate your dosing times by at least 8 hours. “Wellbutrin XL” (extended-release) is taken once a day. The tablet should be taken whole - do not chew or crush.

How will this medication help me?

This medication can help symptoms such as:

- Depressive symptoms - low mood, changes in appetite and sleep, low energy, difficulty concentrating, decreased interest in normal activities, feelings of guilt
- Smoking Cessation – reduces craving to smoke and reduces nicotine withdrawal symptoms

When will the medication start working?

Antidepressants may improve sleep, appetite and energy within 1-2 weeks after reaching an adequate dose; however, feelings of low mood, panic or anxiety may take up to 4-12 weeks to fully improve. Bupropion for smoking cessation should help for nicotine cravings / withdrawal starting after 1 week.

Because the medication takes time to work, do not change the dose or stop the medication without discussing this with your doctor. Your doctor may increase or decrease the medication slowly to decrease side effects. Stopping the medication suddenly may result in uncomfortable withdrawal effects like muscle aches, tingling feelings, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, sleep disturbances, headache, tremor or anxiety.

How long should I take this medication for?

After a first episode of depression, it is recommended that the antidepressant be continued for at least one year; this prevents a relapse of the depression. For people who have had several episodes of depression, lifelong treatment with medication is recommended. For bipolar depression, ask your doctor about how long you should take the medication. Do not stop the medication without discussing it first with your doctor - some antidepressants need to be tapered slowly to avoid side effects. For smoking cessation, a trial would be 7-12 weeks to see if you can successfully quit.

Side effects:

Many side effects are worse at the start of treatment and get better or disappear over a few weeks. If a side effect continues, speak to your doctor about how to manage it.

- Headache – Usually is temporary. Can be managed with painkillers (e.g. Tylenol®)
- Energized or agitated feeling, or insomnia – Some people may feel nervous or have difficulty sleeping for a few days after starting the medication. If the medication disturbs your sleep or if you get nightmares, take it in the morning.
- Dry mouth – Ice cubes, sipping water, and sugarless gum help increase saliva in your mouth (avoid sweet juices or pop). For severe dry mouth, moisture sprays / gels for the mouth can be bought at a pharmacy – ask the pharmacist about what products are available.
- Nausea or heartburn – Usually goes away with time. Taking medication with a meal may help.
- Dizziness – Get up from a lying or sitting position slowly. Sit or lie down if dizziness persists.
- Decrease in appetite - Discuss this with your doctor.
- Increased sweating - Frequent showering and use of antiperspirant can help. If sweating is severe, ask your pharmacist about stronger antiperspirants that are available.
- Tremor – Discuss this with your doctor.
- Rash (rare) – Let your doctor know if you get a rash.
- Seizures – Rare, usually related to higher-than-usual doses. Tell your doctor if you have ever had a seizure, or if you have a seizure while taking this medication.
- Suicidal thinking - A small percentage of young adults (24 or younger) may have an increase in suicidal thinking and behaviour after starting an antidepressant. In studies, this happens in about 4% of young adults compared to 2% taking a placebo (dummy pill). Young adults should be closely monitored when starting an antidepressant. Anyone with new or worsening suicidal thoughts should contact their doctor immediately.

This is not a complete list of side effects. If you feel unwell, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

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

If you take your dose once a day in the morning, you can take it later the same day if you remember. If you take the medication twice a day and if you forgot to take the morning dose by more than 4 hours, skip the dose and continue with your scheduled evening dose.

Interactions with other medications

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other medications you are taking, including herbal remedies and medications that you can buy at the pharmacy. Always inform any doctor or dentist you see that you are taking this medication.

Other Precautions

- Do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery if you feel drowsy or slowed down.
- This drug may increase the effects of alcohol, making you feel more sleepy, dizzy or lightheaded. Heavy drinking may increase the chance of seizures.
- Contact your doctor immediately if you become pregnant or intend to become pregnant.

This list is provided by Sunnybrook as a guideline to assist patients. Patients should always seek professional advice on the appropriate diet for their particular circumstances.

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