

# Bupropion

Bupropion is a unique antidepressant which is often chosen when side effects need to be avoided. Bupropion does not cause weight gain, drowsiness, or sexual side effects. It has more cognitive benefits than other antidepressants and is also used to treat attention-deficit disorder (ADD). It works as well for depression as other antidepressants and, like the others, takes 3-6 weeks to work.

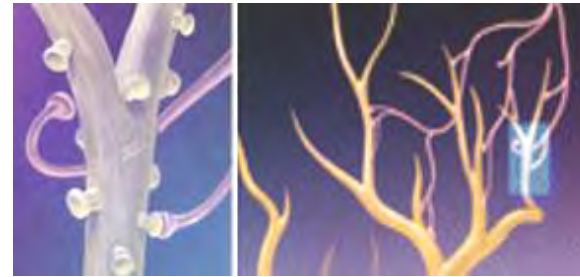
Bupropion is also FDA-approved to treat seasonal (winter) depression. It is often used to treat bipolar depression, since it may cause fewer problems in bipolar disorder than other antidepressants.

Other potential benefits include nicotine cessation, restoration of sex drive, weight loss (when combined with naltrexone), and restless leg syndrome.

Unlike many other antidepressants, bupropion may not be effective for anxiety disorders (including panic attacks and obsessive-compulsive disorder), unless the anxiety is caused by an underlying mood disorder which bupropion treats.

## How does it work?

Bupropion is the only antidepressant which works by enhancing both dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain. These nerve signals are involved in motivation, mood, energy and concentration. Bupropion also enhances brain growth in the hippocampus and amygdala, which are involved in mood and memory.



*Before treatment:* the effects of depression and stress have caused this nerve cell to shrink back like a tree with few branches.



*After treatment:* Bupropion strengthens the roots and connections of the cell. The result is better communication within the brain and better stress management.

## What types are available and how is it taken?

Bupropion is available in several once a day forms. This capsule should not be crushed or chewed, as that can break the extended-release coating. It is best to take it in the morning to prevent the side effect of insomnia. Taking it with food may help reduce stomach discomfort.

The SR and instant-release forms of bupropion need to be spread out two to three times per day (taking them all at once can increase the risk of seizures).

It is important not to double-up on your doses, since taking too much can cause seizures. If you miss a dose, ask yourself if you are closer to the dose you missed or to your next dose. If you are closer to your next dose, just wait and take it then, otherwise it's ok to take the dose you missed.

## What side effects can I expect?

Most people who take bupropion have no side effects. However, a few people feel uncomfortably activated soon after starting it. This feeling can include anxiety, insomnia, headache, stomach discomfort, tremor and agitation. Although not dangerous, it usually makes people stop the medicine. Bupropion can lower appetite and increase energy. Generally, there are no serious side effects, although it can increase the risk of seizures in higher doses and, rarely, can raise blood pressure.

It is important to let me know if you habits of bingeing and purging (i.e. vomiting) food, since this can increase the risk of seizures with bupropion.

## Precautions

*Pregnancy and Breast-feeding:* Bupropion passes into breast milk. It has not been studied in pregnancy. Although no problems have been reported with it, it is probably best to plan pregnancy and breast feeding so as to avoid any exposure to medication.

Bupropion can increase the risk of seizures.

## Drug Interactions

*Bupropion may increase levels of:*

Atomoxetine (Strattera), fluvoxamine (Luvox), paroxetine (Paxil), fluoxetine (Prozac), valproate (Depakote), risperidone (Risperdal), haloperidol (Haldol), perphenazine, thioridazine, tricyclinc antidepressants, warfarin (Coumadin), meperidine, metoprolol, propafenone, flecainide.

*Medicines that can lower bupropion levels:*

Tegretol (Carbamazepine), phenytoin (Dilantin), rifampin.

*Medicines that can increase bupropion levels (may increase seizure risk):*

Cimetidine, protease inhibitors, fluvoxamine (Luvox).

*Medicines that should be avoided with bupropion:*

MAOIs (phenelzine, nardil, parnate, tranylcypromine)

## 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.

–Chris Aiken, MD, updated 1/29/2015

## Quick facts

Brand name	Wellbutrin, Fortivo XL, Aplenzin, Zyban
Dose range	75-450mg/d
Sizes	> Instant release: 75, 100mg (divided 2-3x/day) > Sustained release: 100, 150, 200mg (divided 2/day) > XL 150, 200mg (once/day) > Aplenzin 174, 348, 522mg (once/day) > Forfivo: 450mg (once/day)
Release date	12/30/1985
FDA-approval	Depression, seasonal depression, smoking cessation