

Medication Information for Parents and Teachers

Buspirone—BuSpar

General Information About Medication

Each child and adolescent is different. No one has exactly the same combination of medical and psychological problems. It is a good idea to talk with the doctor or nurse about the reasons a medicine is being used. It is very important to keep all appointments and to be in touch by telephone if you have concerns. It is important to communicate with the doctor, nurse, or therapist.

It is very important that the medicine be taken exactly as the doctor instructs. However, once in a while, everyone forgets to give a medicine on time. It is a good idea to ask the doctor or nurse what to do if this happens. Do not stop or change a medicine without asking the doctor or nurse first.

If the medicine seems to stop working, it may be because it is not being taken regularly. The youth may be “cheeking” or hiding the medicine or forgetting to take it (especially at school). The doses may be too far apart, or a different dose may be needed. Something at school, at home, or in the neighborhood may be upsetting the youth, or he or she may need special help for learning disabilities or tutoring. Please discuss your concerns with the doctor. **Do not just increase the dose.**

All medicines should be kept in a safe place, out of the reach of children, and should be supervised by an adult. If someone takes too much of a medicine, call the doctor, the poison control center, or a hospital emergency room.

Each medicine has a “generic” or chemical name. Just like laundry detergents or paper towels, some medicines are sold by more than one company under different brand names. The same medicine may be available under a generic name and several brand names. The generic medications are usually less expensive than the brand name ones. The generic medications have the same chemical formula, but they may or may not be exactly the same strength as the brand-name medications. Also, some brands of pills contain dye that can cause allergic reactions. It is a good idea to talk to the doctor and the pharmacist about whether it is important to use a specific brand of medicine.

All medicines can cause an allergic reaction. Examples are hives, itching, rashes, swelling, and trouble breathing. Even a tiny amount of a medicine can cause a reaction in patients who are allergic to that medicine. Be *sure* to talk to the doctor before restarting a medicine that has caused an allergic reaction.

Taking more than one medicine at the same time may cause more side effects or cause one of the medicines to not work as well. Always ask the doctor, nurse, or pharmacist before adding another medicine, whether prescription or over-the-counter. Be sure that each doctor knows about *all* of the medicines your child is taking. Also tell the doctor about any vitamins, herbal medicines, or supplements your child may be taking. Some of these may have side effects alone or when taken with this medication.

Everyone taking medicine should have a physical examination at least once a year.

If you suspect the youth is using drugs or alcohol, please tell the doctor right away.

Pregnancy requires special care in the use of medicine. Please tell the doctor immediately if you suspect the teenager is pregnant or might become pregnant.

Printed information like this applies to children and adolescents in general. If you have questions about the medicine, or if you notice changes or anything unusual, please ask the doctor or nurse. As scientific research advances, knowledge increases and advice changes. Even experts do not always agree. Many medicines have not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children. For this reason, use of the medicine for a particular problem or age group often is not listed in the *Physicians' Desk Reference*. This does not necessarily mean that the medicine is dangerous or does not work, only that the company that makes the medicine has not received permission to advertise the medicine for use in children. Companies often do not apply for this permission because it is expensive to do the tests needed to apply for approval for use in children. Once a medication is approved by the FDA for any purpose, a doctor is allowed to prescribe it according to research and clinical experience.

Note to Teachers

It is a good idea to talk with the parent(s) about the reason(s) that a medication is being used. If the parent(s) sign consent to release information, it is often helpful to talk with the doctor. If the parent(s) give permission, the doctor may ask you to fill out rating forms about your experience with the student's behavior, feelings, academic performance, and medication side effects. This information is very useful in selecting and monitoring medication treatment. If you have observations that you think are important, do not hesitate to share these with the student's parent(s) and treating clinicians.

It is very important that the medicine be taken exactly as the doctor instructs. However, everyone forgets to give a medicine on time once in a while. It is a good idea to ask the parent(s) in advance what to do if this happens. Do not stop or change the time you are giving a medicine at school without parental permission. If a medication is to be taken with food, but lunchtime or snack time changes, be sure to notify the parent(s) so appropriate adjustments can be made.

All medicines should be kept in a secure place and should be supervised by an adult. If someone takes too much of a medicine, follow your school procedure for an urgent medical problem.

Taking medicine is a private matter and is best managed discreetly and confidentially. It is important to be sensitive to the student's feelings about taking medicine.

If you suspect that the student is using drugs or alcohol, please tell the parent(s) or a school counselor right away.

Please tell the parent(s) or school nurse if you suspect medication side effects.

Modifications of the classroom environment or assignments may be useful in addition to medication. The student may need to be evaluated for additional help or for an Individualized Education Plan for learning or behavior.

Any expression of suicidal thoughts or feelings or self-harm by a child or adolescent is a clear signal of distress and should be taken seriously. These behaviors should not be dismissed as "attention seeking."

What Is Buspirone (BuSpar)?

Buspirone is called an *antianxiety* medicine. It comes in BuSpar brand name and generic tablets. It is not chemically related to the *benzodiazepines* (other antianxiety medicines like Valium or Ativan).

How Can This Medicine Help?

Buspirone can decrease anxiety, nervousness, fears, and excessive worrying. It can help anxious people to be calm enough to learn—with therapy and practice—to understand and tolerate their worries or fears and even to overcome them. Most often, it is used for a short time when symptoms are very uncomfortable or frightening or when they make it hard to do important things such as go to school. Occasionally antianxiety medicines are used for longer periods to treat anxiety that remains after therapy is completed.

How Does This Medicine Work?

Buspirone works by calming the parts of the brain that are too excitable in anxious people. It does this by changing the effects of *neurotransmitters*—the chemicals that the brain makes for brain cells to communicate with each other.

Buspirone does not begin to help immediately. The full effect may not appear for 3–4 weeks.

How Long Does This Medicine Last?

Buspirone usually needs to be taken three times a day.

How Will the Doctor Monitor This Medicine?

The doctor will review your child’s medical history and physical examination before starting buspirone. The doctor may order some blood or urine tests to be sure your child does not have a hidden medical condition. The doctor or nurse may measure your child’s height, weight, pulse, and blood pressure before starting buspirone.

After the medicine is started, the doctor will want to have regular appointments with you and your child to see how the medicine is working, to see if a dose change is needed, to watch for side effects, to see if buspirone is still needed, and to see if any other treatment is needed. The doctor or nurse may check your child’s height, weight, pulse, and blood pressure.

What Side Effects Can This Medicine Have?

Any medicine can have side effects, including an allergy to the medicine. Because each patient is different, the doctor will monitor the youth closely, especially when the medicine is started. The doctor will work with you to increase the positive effects and decrease the negative effects of the medicine. Please tell the doctor if any of the listed side effects appear or if you think that the medicine is causing any other problems. Not all of the rare or unusual side effects are listed.

Side effects are most common after starting the medicine or after a dose increase. Many side effects can be avoided or lessened by starting with a very low dose and increasing it slowly—ask the doctor.

Allergic Reaction

Tell the doctor in a day or two (if possible, before the next dose of medicine):

- Hives
- Itching
- Rash

Stop the medicine and get *immediate* medical care:

- Trouble breathing or chest tightness
- Swelling of lips, tongue, or throat

Buspirone is usually very safe when used for short periods as the doctor prescribes. Very rarely, buspirone causes excitement, irritability, anger, aggression, nightmares, or uncontrollable behavior. This is called *disinhibition* or a *paradoxical effect*. Stop the medicine and call the doctor if this happens.

Buspirone may cause dizziness, nervousness, nausea, headache, restlessness, or trouble sleeping but does not cause dependence or sleepiness.

There are no known long-term side effects of buspirone.

Some Interactions With Other Medicines or Food

Please note that the following are only the most likely interactions with food or other medicines.

Buspirone may be taken with or without food.

It is important not to drink alcohol or use other sedatives, tranquilizers, or sleeping pills when taking buspirone.

Taking buspirone with certain antibiotics (such as erythromycin) may increase levels of buspirone and increase side effects.

It can be *very dangerous* to take buspirone at the same time as or even within a month of taking another type of medicine called a *monoamine oxidase inhibitor* (MAOI), such as Eldepryl (selegiline), Nardil (phenelzine), Parnate (tranylcypromine), or Marplan (isocarboxazid).

What Could Happen if This Medicine Is Stopped Suddenly?

There are no known problems from stopping buspirone suddenly. There are no withdrawal symptoms, but the anxiety is likely to come back.

How Long Will This Medicine Be Needed?

Buspirone is usually prescribed for only a few weeks to allow the patient to be calm enough to learn new ways to cope with anxiety and to allow the nervous system to become less excitable. Each person is, of course, unique, and some people may need these medicines for months or years.

