

# Bupropion

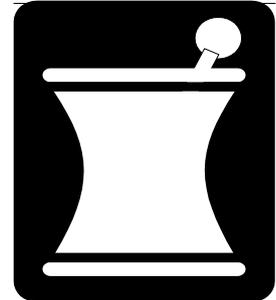
## Patient Information - Hillmorton Hospital Pharmacy

### Why have I been prescribed Bupropion (Zyban®)?

Bupropion can be used to treat depression. Depression is a common condition. It is different from the normal “ups and downs” of everyday life. People with depression may feel sad most of the time and may be lacking in motivation. Tiredness and poor sleep are very common, and so are changes in appetite. Many people find that they simply cannot enjoy any of life’s pleasures.

Depression can be treated in many different ways.

Antidepressants are often used because they are effective for most people. Other “talking” therapies are also effective in depression. Antidepressants can generally be relied upon to relieve the symptoms of depression in most people. Bupropion can also be used as a treatment to help people stop smoking.



### What exactly is Bupropion?

Bupropion is an antidepressant. It is not a tranquilliser or a sleeping tablet. It is a relatively new kind of antidepressant in NZ but has been in widespread use for a few years overseas. The trade or brand name of bupropion is Zyban®. Bupropion acts on chemicals in the brain called noradrenaline and dopamine. Increasing the amount of these chemicals works to treat depression.

### Is Bupropion safe to take?

It is usually safe to take bupropion regularly as prescribed by your doctor, but it doesn’t suit everyone. Let your doctor know if you have the following, as extra care may be needed:

- If you have liver or kidney problems or are a heavy drinker
- If you have diabetes
- If you are taking medications to treat an HIV infection
- If you have epilepsy
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding

### How should I take my Bupropion and what should I do if I miss a dose?

Look at the label on your medicine; it should have all the necessary instructions on it. Follow this advice carefully. If you have any questions, speak to your pharmacist, doctor or nurse. Never change your dose without checking with your doctor. If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within in two or three hours of the usual time. Do not take a double dose to make up for missed doses.

## Is Bupropion addictive?

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Bupropion is not addictive, although some people do get some “discontinuation” effects if they stop their bupropion suddenly. These effects include anxiety, dizziness, feeling sick and not being able to sleep. Some people feel confused and “out of sorts”. Others describe “electric shock” like feelings in their body. This can be avoided by reducing the dose slowly over time. It is best to discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.

## What will happen to me when I start taking my Bupropion?

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All antidepressants may take time to work. People may feel better over a period of weeks rather than days. Different symptoms may get better at different times. Most people find that they feel noticeably better after about two or three weeks. However, the full effects of antidepressants are usually only felt after four to six weeks.

It is very important to continue to take antidepressants so that the full effects can be felt. You may get some side effects. Many of these can be quite mild and should go away after a week or so. Look at the table on the next page. It tells you what to do if you get any side effects. Not everyone will get the side effects shown. There are many other possible side effects. Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect.

## Are there any medicines that I should avoid or take care with?

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Always tell your doctor what you are taking and ask your pharmacist before you buy any “over-the-counter” medicines. Bupropion can react with a range of medicines including other medication for depression, Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy, heart disease and HIV/AIDS. If you are taking medicines for the above listed conditions, check with your doctor.

## When I feel better, can I stop taking Bupropion?

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No. If you stop taking your bupropion, your original symptoms may return. To reduce the chances of becoming depressed again, you may need to take your antidepressant for at least six months after you feel better, and sometimes longer. This is not harmful. You and your doctor should decide when you can come off it.

## What about alcohol?

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It is recommended that when you take bupropion, to avoid drinking alcohol. However, if you drink a large quantity of alcohol and suddenly stop after a long period of regular intake, you may increase your risk of having a seizure. Therefore, it is important to discuss your use of alcohol with your doctor. Once you are used to your bupropion you can sometimes drink alcohol in small amounts without any harm. Avoid alcohol in the first one to two months. After this if you want a drink, try a glass of your normal drink to see how you feel. If this does not make you drowsy and clumsy it is probably okay to drink small amounts. It pays to be very cautious because alcohol affects people in different ways especially when they are taking medication. It is recognised that many road accidents occur because of mixing alcohol with medicines. This includes bupropion.

Don't stop taking bupropion just because you fancy a drink at the weekend. Discuss any concerns you have with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Side effects	What is it?	What should I do if this happens to me?
<b>COMMON</b>		
Tremor	Feeling shaky. Your muscles may feel stiff.	Your doctor may be able to give you something for it or change your medication to one that doesn't cause this.
Anxiety or restlessness	Being more on edge.	This should wear off fairly quickly. Discuss this with your doctor. If it persists, your doctor may give you something.
Headache	When your head is pounding and painful.	You can take paracetamol for this. If your headache continues for a long time discuss with your doctor.
Insomnia	Difficulty in being able to get to sleep at night.	Discuss this with your doctor who may change the time you take your bupropion. Normally bupropion is taken in the morning to reduce any sleep problems.
Dry mouth	Your mouth will feel dry and you will not produce much saliva (spit). Dry mouth can cause problems with speech, taste, chewing and swallowing. It can also the increase the chance of getting dental decay and infection in your mouth.	To help prevent dental problems sip water regularly to moisten your mouth. Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Avoid sugary drinks and snacks between meals. Try sugar free chewing gum to make more saliva or discuss using an oral lubricant with your pharmacist or dentist
Constipation	You can't pass a bowel motion.	Eat more fibre, e.g. bran, fruit and vegetables. Do more walking. Make sure you drink plenty of fluid. A mild laxative from a pharmacy might help.
Nausea, vomiting & abdominal pain	Feeling sick, throwing up and having a sore stomach.	Taking each dose with or after food may help. If it is bad, contact your doctor.
<b>UNCOMMON</b>		
Tachycardia	A faster heartbeat. It may feel like palpitations.	Contact your doctor.
Loss of appetite	Not feeling hungry.	If this is a problem, contact your doctor or your pharmacist for advice.

Hypertension	High blood pressure. This will be tested by your doctor regularly.	Contact your doctor.
Visual disturbances	Changes to your vision.	Contact your doctor.
Ringing in your ears	Hearing a constant ringing sound.	Contact your doctor.
Urinary retention	Trouble peeing.	Discuss this with your doctor when you next meet.
Allergic reaction	A sudden onset of skin rash, itching, swelling, of your face, lips and tongue, difficulty breathing.	Contact your doctor or the emergency department immediately.
<b>RARE</b>		
Seizures	Having a "fit" or a seizure.	Stop taking your bupropion and contact your doctor or the emergency department immediately.

**Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet, you may find a lot of information there as well but be careful as internet based information is not always accurate.**

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