Jeffrey Panko NP
PSYCHIATRY

Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC
Phone 646-549-4694 | Fax 646-558-4238
JMPankoNP@JeffreyPanko.com
jeffreypanko.com

PATIENT EDUCATION

Buspirone

Generic tablets / Nonbenzodiazepine anxiety treatment

A guide for adults taking buspirone.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

TAKE ON A DAILY SCHEDULE

WITH OR WITHOUT FOOD · BE CONSISTENT

Formulations: Tablets are commonly prescribed in two or three daily doses. A scored tablet may allow a prescribed split; confirm the instructions for your tablet.

What it is used for

Buspirone treats ongoing anxiety, particularly generalized anxiety disorder. Providers sometimes use it off-label alongside an antidepressant. It is not a rescue medication for a sudden panic attack.

How it works

It partially activates serotonin 5-HT1A receptors. Repeated dosing changes signaling involved in anxiety over time.

What to expect over time

Anxiety may begin to improve after a few weeks of regular treatment. Your provider may adjust the dose gradually; inconsistent dosing makes the response harder to assess.

Taking your medication

- Take on a regular schedule rather than only when anxious.
- Take consistently with food or consistently without food; switching changes absorption.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Do not take extra for immediate relief. Avoid large amounts of grapefruit or grapefruit juice.

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Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Dizziness, headache, or lightheadedness
- Nausea or stomach discomfort
- Nervousness or sleep changes

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Track worry, muscle tension, sleep, and ability to manage daily activities. Report persistent dizziness or new restlessness.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Discuss severe kidney or liver disease and all recent antidepressants. Buspirone does not prevent benzodiazepine withdrawal; an existing benzodiazepine needs its own taper plan.

Discuss pregnancy, pregnancy plans, and breastfeeding with your provider. Treatment decisions should consider both the medication and the condition being treated.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Do not combine with an MAOI antidepressant or use within the required 14-day switching interval. Linezolid and IV methylene blue also need special precautions.

Other serotonergic medicines can increase serotonin-syndrome risk. Strong CYP3A inhibitors or inducers can change buspirone levels. Avoid alcohol until its effects and your treatment plan are reviewed.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for severe allergy or fever with confusion, diarrhea, tremor, and stiff or twitching muscles, which may indicate serotonin syndrome.

Prompt medical advice. Report marked agitation, fainting, or new involuntary movements.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Is it a benzodiazepine?
No. It does not have the same dependence profile and is not a controlled substance, but it can still cause dizziness or other side effects.

Can I stop it?
Consult with your provider. A taper is generally not needed for buspirone itself, but anxiety can return and other medications may have different stopping requirements.

Everyday tips

Pair doses with consistent daily routines and the same food pattern.

Use therapy or other agreed anxiety-management strategies while medication takes effect.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

MedlinePlus: Buspirone

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.