

Bupropion (Wellbutrin SR® or Zyban®)

Information for Quitting Tobacco

About Bupropion:

Bupropion was originally used for depression, but was found to also help smokers stop smoking. It works on the reward and pleasure pathways in the brain to reduce cravings to smoke. Tobacco users do not have to be depressed for bupropion to help them. It is approved by the FDA to help people quit using tobacco.

Unlike the nicotine patch, gum, or lozenge, bupropion does not contain nicotine. However, it is sometimes combined with a nicotine replacement product and may work better this way for some people.

Usual Directions:

- Bupropion is started before you stop smoking or stop using tobacco, usually one to two weeks before your quit date, in order to build up the level of medicine in your body before you actually quit.
- Start with one pill a day for 3 days, and then increase to one in the morning and one in the late afternoon/evening.

Your health care provider will tell you what dose is best for you.

Helpful Tips:

- Take each pill with food and a glass of water or other liquid
- Take the bupropion pill about the same time each day
- DO NOT cut or crush the pill; it must be swallowed whole
- AVOID the use of alcohol while taking bupropion

Common side effects include:

- Dry mouth
- Difficulty sleeping
- Headaches
- Increased blood pressure

Safety Warnings:

You should not use bupropion if you have a history of:

Seizure disorders, head injury, eating disorder, or a recent history of alcoholism. The possibility of having a seizure is rare, but you are at greater risk for having a seizure if you have had any of these conditions.

You may have heard of concerns about rare but serious side effects in some people taking bupropion, including changes in behavior, agitation, anger or violent behavior, depressed mood, suicidal thoughts or behaviors, confusion, hallucinations, an extreme increase in activity and talking, and acting on dangerous impulses.

These symptoms, as well as worsening of pre-existing psychiatric conditions, have been reported in some people trying to quit smoking while taking bupropion. Some people have experienced symptoms when they

began taking bupropion, others developed them after several weeks on bupropion, and some reported them after stopping bupropion.

Recent research has proven that these side effects do not happen as often due to taking bupropion as was once believed. The package warnings have been removed.

However, if you or your family notice any unusual behavior changes stop taking bupropion right away and call your doctor or seek medical care. If in doubt, call your doctor.

If you have a history of high blood pressure, please tell your health care provider before taking bupropion.

Please do not use bupropion if you are pregnant or breast feeding unless recommended by your health care provider.

Bupropion can interact with some medications, including non-prescription medications. Please check with your pharmacist or health care provider.

Other Considerations:

Skin or other allergic reactions are also reasons to stop taking bupropion and get medical help right away. Signs of reactions include:

- Swelling – especially of your face, lips, tongue, throat or neck
- Hives
- Breathing difficulties
- Blistering rash in the mouth or on the skin

If you have any of these symptoms, stop taking bupropion immediately and seek medical care. These might be life threatening and require emergency attention. If in doubt about your immediate safety, call 911 or have someone bring you to the emergency room.

KEEP THIS MEDICINE IN THE TIGHTLY CLOSED CONTAINER OUT OF REACH OF ALL CHILDREN AND PETS.

The information on this handout can change. Please refer to package inserts, and talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

MaineHealth
Center for Tobacco
Independence