

Antianxiety Medicines

Medicines for People
With Too Much Worry

6



About Project MED

“Project MED” stands for **M**edication **E**Ducation. The Project MED Group has written a series of eight education booklets about medicines. These booklets will help you if you have learning problems, reading problems, or problems understanding why you are taking medicine. These booklets will also be useful to you if English is not your main language. Parents, guardians, and other care givers might like to read these booklets too.

Our goal was to write the information in plain words. When we cannot avoid using a hard-to-read word, we give you help in pronouncing (pronoun'-sing) the word. We also describe what the hard-to-read word means in parentheses ().

Antianxiety

Medicines

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Antianxiety (an-tie-ang-ZYE'-uh-tee) Medicines

Everyone feels nervous (NER'-vus), tense, or worried at times. This is common. One word for feeling this way is *anxiety* (ang-ZYE'-uh-tee). It is normal to feel some anxiety in life. But, sometimes, people get too nervous or too anxious. They may not feel well. Or they may not be able to do their jobs well. If this happens, your doctor may think that you are too anxious (ANG'-shus).

Antianxiety (an-tie-ang-ZYE'-uh-tee) medicines are used for people who feel too nervous. You may feel too worried or too tense. You may get so nervous you can't go to school or work. Things that used to be easy for you to do might start to be hard to do. Sometimes antianxiety medicines are used to help people who have other problems, too. We will talk about this later.

Most medicines have two names – a *brand* name and a *generic* (je-NAIR'-ik) name. Brand names are names given to the medicines by the company that makes them. A medicine may have more than one brand name. Generic names describe the chemicals (KEM'-i-kuls) used to make the medicine. A medicine can have only one generic name.

Examples: One antianxiety medicine had the brand name of *Valium* (VAL'-ee-um) and the generic name diazepam (dye-AZZ'-uh-pam).

Another has the brand name of *Benadryl* (BEN'-a-drill) and the generic name diphenhydramine (dye-fen-HI'-druh-meen).

We will talk about three kinds of antianxiety medicines. This is a good time to look at your own bottle of medicine. You need to know what group of medicine you are taking. Two lists of medicine follow. Try to match the name on your bottle with one of the names in the lists (parts 1, 2, or 3 below). It is important to know the kind of medicine you take. You may want to circle the name below.

1. Tranquilizer (TRAN'-kwil-i-zer) Medicines

"Tranquil" (TRAN'-kwil) means *peaceful*. Tranquilizers (TRAN'-kwil-i-zers) are medicines that help you feel calm or peaceful. We have listed some of them below. We give both the brand names and the generic names of some tranquilizers, since your medicine may have only one name on the bottle. The most common names appear in *italics*.

Tranquilizer Medicines

Generic Name	Brand Name(s)
<i>alprazolam</i>	<i>Xanax</i>
clorazepate	Tranxene
chlordiazepoxide	Librium
<i>clonazepam</i>	<i>Klonopin</i>
<i>diazepam</i>	<i>Valium</i>
flurazepam	Dalmane
lorazepam	Ativan
nitrazepam	Mogadon
oxazepam	Serax, Serapax
temazepam	Restoril, Euphonos
triazolam	Halcion

2. Antihistamines (AN'-tie-HISS'-tuh-meens)

Antihistamines are used a lot for colds and allergies. But they can also be used to make anxiety less. The antihistamines are listed in the table below. We give *both* the brand names and the generic names. Your medicine may have only one of these names on the bottle.

Antihistamines

Generic Name	Brand Name(s)
<i>diphenhydramine</i>	<i>Benadryl</i>
doxylamine	Unisom
<i>hydroxyzine</i>	<i>Atarax, Vistaril</i>
promethazine	Phenegan
trimeprazine	Temaril, Vallergan

3. Buspirone (BUSE'-per-own) (BuSpar)

This is a newer kind of antianxiety medicine. Its generic name is *buspirone* (BUSE'-per-own).

If you found your medicine in one of the sections, circle the group below. Circle the *kind* that it is.

My antianxiety medicine is:

- a tranquilizer
- an antihistamine
- buspirone (BuSpar)

What's New?

Zolpidem tartrate (Ambien) is a newer sleep medicine. It is a little like the tranquilizer medicines.

Uses for Antianxiety Medicines

Tranquilizers and Buspirone

1. Proven Uses

Depending on the group, these medicines have different uses. We will talk about the tranquilizers and buspirone here. We will talk about the antihistamines late.

a) Major anxiety problem. You may:

- feel very nervous, worried, or stressed most of the time for no reason
- be scared of certain things. These may be things that do not scare most people. They may be things like leaving your house, being up in high places, being near certain animals, riding in elevators (EL'-eh-vate-ors) or being in a crowd.



- get very nervous around other people or new people.
- get very anxious or nervous because you are doing something new. You may have trouble getting used to a new job or a new school.
- get very nervous because of something very bad that happened in the past. You may at times remember things that you want to forget.

b) Trouble sleeping. Some people have trouble falling asleep. Some people wake up in the middle of the night. Some wake up too early in the morning. If the person has trouble sleeping and is tired during the day, this can be a big problem. Sometimes antianxiety medicines (especially tranquilizers) can help people who cannot sleep.



c) *Epilepsy (EP'-ih-lep-see)*. Some tranquilizer medicines are used to help people with epilepsy (EP'-ih-lep-see). People with epilepsy may have times when they lose consciousness (KON'-shus-ness). They may suddenly not be able to stay awake. They may fall down. They may be "spaced out" (confused) for short times. Or they may have odd muscle movements that they cannot stop. If this happens again and again, the person may have epilepsy or seizure (SEE'-zurs). There is a special booklet like this one for people with epilepsy or seizures. It is called *Anticonvulsant (AN'-tie-kun-vul-sent) Medicines (Medicines for People with Epilepsy)*. Try to get that booklet if you have epilepsy (see the back of this booklet). It is booklet #2.

2. Others Uses (Not Proven)

Sometimes these medicines are used to reduce other problems. These uses are not proven. Here are some of them.

- Sometimes other medicines called "antipsychotics" (an-tie-sy-KOT'-iks) make people feel edgy or nervous. The antipsychotics may give them "restless legs" – a feeling that they need to walk around. The Tranquilizers may help get rid of this bad feeling.

- Sometimes people have big problems called psychoses (sye-KO'-seez). They may get very rowdy or excited. Tranquilizer medicines or BuSpar may help reduce this excited feeling. They may be used with other medicines called antipsychotics.
- Sometimes the tranquilizers are used for Tourette's (tur-RETZ') disorder. People with Tourette's disorder sometimes may make odd sounds. They do not want to make these sounds. The sounds might be "barks," "grunts," or cuss (dirty) words. Sometimes they make sudden jerks called "tics." These tics may happen in the face, the hands, or arms. Some of the tranquilizers *may* help to stop these problems.
- Some people get mad too easily. They may fly off the handle and try to hurt other people. If this is a big problem, the doctor may give them BuSpar. Sometimes BuSpar helps people control their anger.
- Some people hurt themselves over and over. They may bite themselves. Or they may scratch themselves. They may hit their own bodies. Sometimes BuSpar may help people stop doing these things.

Antihistamines

1. Proven Uses

These medicines have three main proven uses.

They are:

- allergies (AL'-er-jees). Sometimes antihistamines reduce runny nose and sneezing from allergies.
- colds. Sometimes these medicines stop runny nose or coughing (KAW'-fing) from colds.
- sleep problems. If you have a big problem falling asleep, these medicines may help. They may make it easier to fall asleep or to stay asleep.



2. Other Uses (Not Proven)

Sometimes antihistamine medicines are used to help people who have behavior problems. The patient may get really mad very easily. They may hurt other people or they may break things for no good reason. They may “tear up” furniture or things around the home. Antihistamines may help stop these problems.

Side Effects

Side effects are unplanned changes that sometimes happen when you take a medicine. Sometimes side effects are a problem. Sometimes side effects can even be a help.

1. Tranquilizer Medicines

These medicines can cause several side effects. Here are some of them. The tranquilizers can:

- make you feel tired. If you take the medicine for sleep problems, sometimes it can make you groggy (tired) the next day.
- make it hard to walk well or use your hands well (you may feel kind of “drunk”).
- make you rowdy. You may become wild, loud, or rough. You may become hard to manage – like some people are when they are drunk. (This can be a big problem for children.)





- make it harder to remember things. You may have trouble remembering things that happened *when you were taking medicine*. Later, when you are not taking the medicine, you may have trouble remembering things that happened when you were taking it.
- make you move slower.
- make you feel that you *need* more tranquilizers. These medicines help get rid of anxiety. Sometimes patients try to avoid anxiety all the time. They may feel that they need more medicine – even to do things that did not make them anxious before.

Also, if you take this kind of medicine for a long time, you may feel bad when you stop taking it. A long time may be 3 months or longer. This also depends on how much medicine you take each day. Shortly after stopping the medicine you may:

- feel even more nervous
- have trouble sleeping
- have shaky hands
- feel grumpy
- sweat more than you usually do
- lose your appetite (AP'-eh-tite) (not feel as hungry as usual).

If you have any of these problems – either when taking your medicine or when stopping the medicine – be sure to tell your doctor.

2. Antihistamines

Some of the common problems with these medicines are:

- dry skin.
- dry mouth, dry nose, or dry throat. If your mouth feels dry, you may want to chew gum or suck on hard candy.
- blurred vision (trouble reading small print).

- constipation (kon-stih-PAY'-shun) (trouble going to the bathroom)
- trouble urinating (YURR'-in-ate-ing, or peeing) or urinating too often.
- your heart may beat faster than normal
- dizziness
- restless or nervousness
- trouble sleeping.

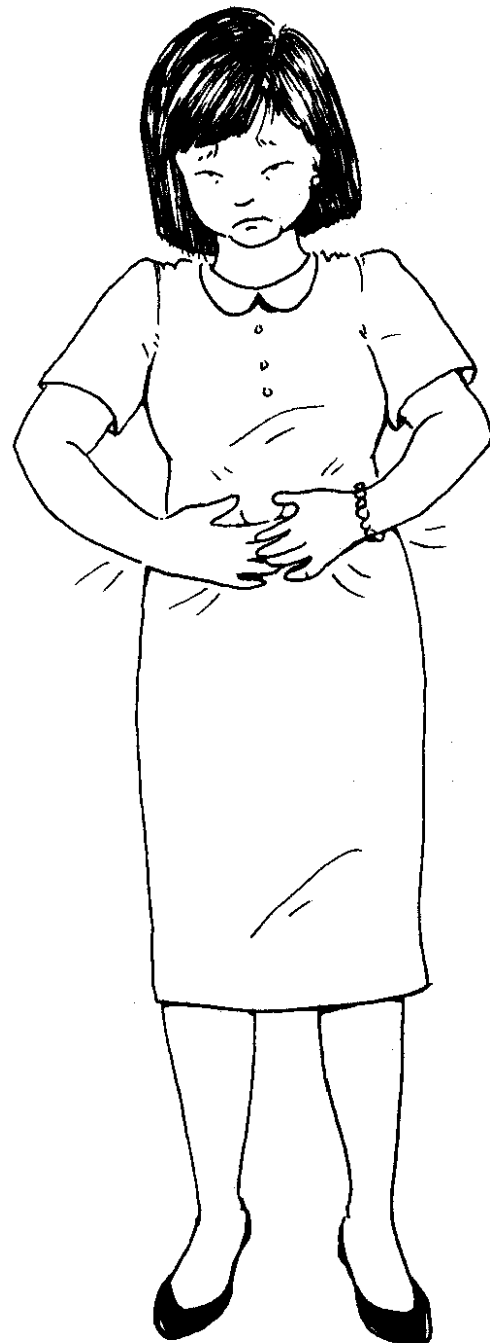
If you have any of these problems, tell your doctor.

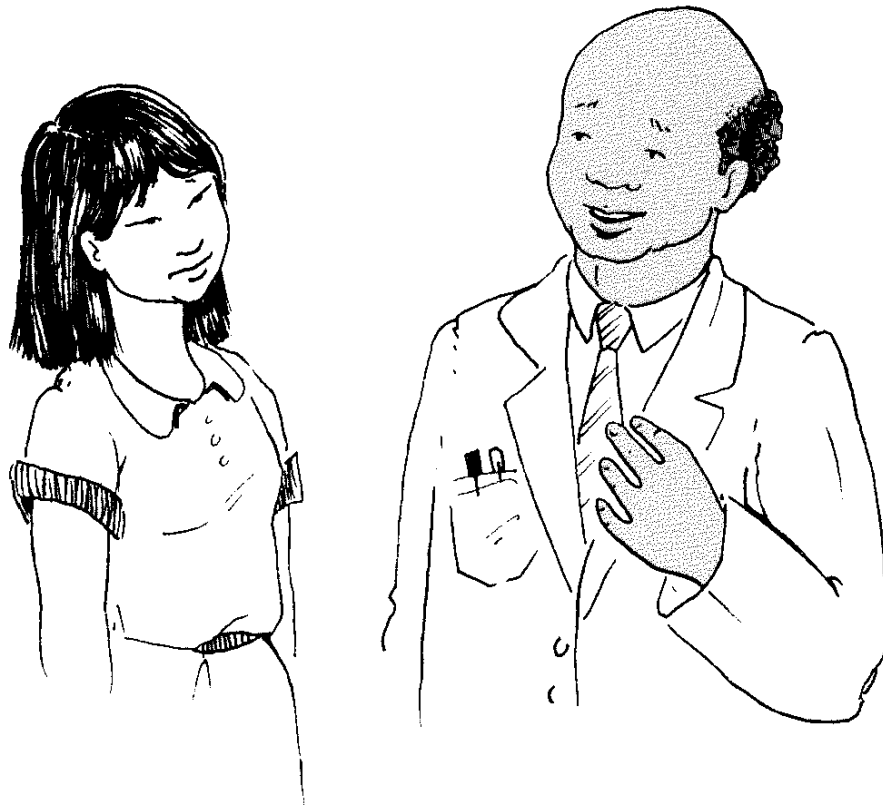
3. Buspirone (BuSpar)

This medicine does not have many side effects. Some possible side effects are:

- dizziness (or light headedness)
- nausea (NAW'-zee-uh) or upset stomach (STUM'-ik)
- nervousness
- trouble sleeping
- headaches.

If you notice any of these problems, tell your doctor.





Doses

The “dose” is the amount of medicine you are taking. The amount of medicine you take is printed on your medicine bottle as a number with the letters *mgs*. *Mgs* stands for “milligrams” (MILL'-ih-grams). Medicines are usually measured in milligrams.

1. Tranquilizers

The tranquilizer medicines differ in their strengths. Your doctor may have you take more than one pill a day. The doses listed below are the total amounts an adult might take in a day. If you are only taking one dose, the amount may be less.

Medicine	Dose
clonazepam (Klonopin, Rivotril)	0.5 to 3.5 mg/ day total
chlordiazepoxide (Librium)	15 to 35 mg/ day total
diazepam (Valium)	5 to 35 mg/ day total
alprazolam (Xanax)	1 to 5.5 mg/ day total

We only give doses for some of the tranquilizers. The doses may differ from one person to another. If you are a child or an older adult, these doses may be too high. If your medicine is not listed here, you may want to ask your doctor or pharmacist (FAR'-ma-sist) how big the dose is. The pharmacist is the person who gives you your medicine at the drugstore.

2. Antihistamines

Common doses for three of these medicines are:

Medicine	Dose
hydroxyzine (Atarax)	10 – 400 mg
diphenhydramine (Benadryl)	25 – 300 mg
doxylamine (Unisom)	25 – 150 mg

3. Buspirone (BuSpar)

This medicine is usually taken two or three times a day. *Each time* you will probably take between 5 mg and 30 mg.

Common Interactions (in-ter-AKT'-shuns)

“Interaction” means that some effects of a medicine are made stronger or weaker when another medicine or certain foods are taken with it. We will describe just a *few* interactions here. They are different for each of the antianxiety medicines. So we will talk about each medicine be itself. You only need to read about the medicine(s) that you are taking: tranquilizers or antihistamines or buspirone (BuSpar).

1. Tranquilizer Medicines

These medicines may interact with:

- alcohol. Alcohol (like beer, wine, and gin) can make the effects of these medicines too strong. This could be dangerous. **Do not drink alcohol when taking these medicines.**

- certain antidepressants (an-tie-dee-PRESS'-ents). Some of these are desipramine (Norpramin), imipramine (Tofranil), fluoxetine (Prozac), and sertraline (Zoloft). These medicines may increase the effects of the tranquilizer. Or, the tranquilizers may increase the effects of the antidepressants.
- antipsychotics, like thioridazine (Mellaril) or chlorpromazine (Thorazine). Taking tranquilizers and antipsychotics may make you feel very tired or spaced out.
- grapefruit juice. Grapefruit juice may increase the effects of some tranquilizers [like alprazolam (Xanax) or triazolam (Halcion)].
- cigarettes, Smoking cigarettes may reduce the effectiveness of diazepam (Valium).
- birth control pills. Some birth control pills may increase the effects of some tranquilizers.
- caffeine. Caffeine (in coffee, tea, chocolate, cola drinks) may make you feel more anxious. Caffeine may make the tranquilizers less useful. Example: you may have trouble sleeping after drinking coffee or cola.



2. Antihistamines

These medicines may increase the effects of other medicines that make you feel tired. Some of the other medicines are:

- some antidepressants [e.g., amitriptyline (Elavil), imipramine (Tofranil)].
- some antipsychotics [like chlorpromazine (Thorazine) and thioridazine (Mellaril)].
- tranquilizers like the ones we talked about in this booklet.

Alcohol (like beer, wine, gin) may make you feel more tired if you are taking antihistamines. If you drink alcohol with antihistamines, you may get “drunk” more easily. This could be very dangerous.

3. Buspirone (BuSpar)

BuSpar does not interact with many other medicines. But it does interact with some things.

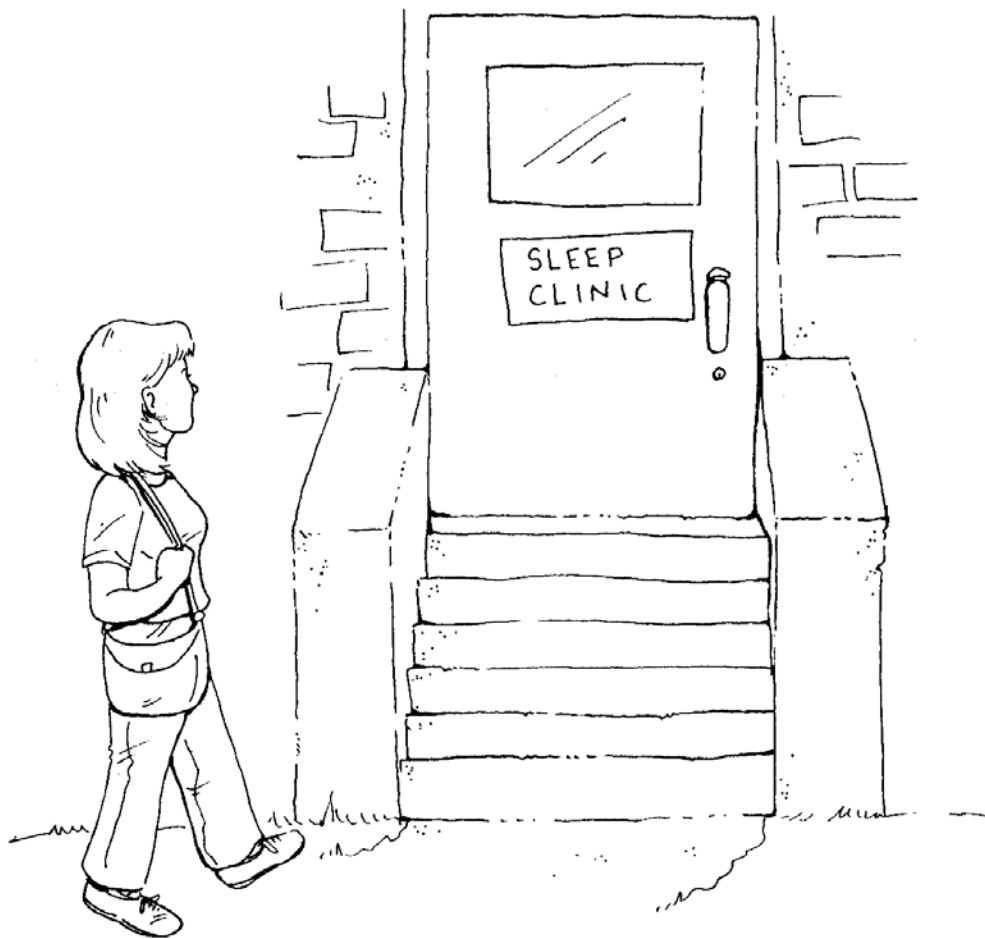
- Sometimes BuSpar is used with SSRI medicines: fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil), sertraline (Zoloft), or fluvoxamine (Luvox). BuSpar may help the other medicines work better.
- Sometimes anxiety may not be reduced with BuSpar if it is taken with SSRI medicines.

- If taken with some antidepressant medicines called “MAOIs,” buspirone may cause high blood pressure. This could be very dangerous!
- If taken with antipsychotic medicines like thioridazine (Mellaril) or haloperidol (Haldol), it may increase special nervous problems (trouble with certain muscles).

How Long Will I Take This Medicine?

Some anxiety is normal in life. Everyone feels nervous or tense at times. But if the worry or anxiety gets too big, it can make it difficult for some people to live as they would like to. Usually it is a good idea only to take medicine as long as you really need it. If having too much worry is a new problem for you, you may be able to stop the medicine when the problem goes away. But if you are having big problems with worry and anxiety, you may need to take the medicine much longer. Talk with your doctor.

Tranquilizer medicines and antihistamines can help sleep problems for a little while. But if they are used too long, they may *stop* helping. If you have a sleep problem for a long time, it may be best to get help to treat it without medicine. Not taking caffeine can help. Exercise (especially early in the day) can help, too. Controlling your stress can help. If you have had a sleep problem for a long time tell your doctor. Or, ask your doctor about going to a sleep clinic. This is a place that deals with many kinds of sleep problems.



Source

Much of the information in this booklet was taken from this book:

Reiss, S. & Aman, M. G. (1998) (Eds). Psychotropic medicines and developmental disabilities: The international consensus handbook. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Nisonger Center. ISBN 0-9658966-0-9.

About the Series

“Project MED” (Medication **ED**ucation for Consumers) was created with funding from the U.S. Administration on Developmental Disabilities. The goal of Project MED is to provide patients with information, in a manner that they can understand, about the medications that they are taking. The booklets are designed for a broad group of people taking medications: people with mental retardation, autism, reading difficulties, severe mental illness, child and adolescent patients, and people whose first language is not English. By providing this information, we hope to increase each patient’s participation in his or her own health care.

The series consists of eight booklets. The booklets were written to provide basic information about patients’ rights and about medications in easily understood words. There are few medical or legal words, and difficult words are defined.

The eight booklets are:

1. Patients’ Rights and Responsibilities
2. Anticonvulsant Medicines (Medicines for People With Epilepsy)
3. Antipsychotic Medicines
4. Antidepressant Medicines
5. Antimanic Medicines (Medicines for People With Mood Problems)
6. Antianxiety Medicines
7. Stimulant Medicines
8. Other Medicines (Blood Pressure Medicines, Naltrexone, and Over the Counter).

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