
BREXPIRAZOLE (Rexulti) Fact Sheet

BOTTOM LINE:

Brexpiprazole is a cousin of aripiprazole and is also a partial dopamine agonist. It has a very similar efficacy profile (including efficacy for depression in adults) and a similar side effect profile, but is much more expensive and has less data and experience in children. We recommend choosing the cheaper, generic aripiprazole.

PEDIATRIC FDA INDICATIONS:

Schizophrenia (13–17).

ADULT FDA INDICATIONS:

Schizophrenia; depression adjunct.

OFF-LABEL USES:

Dementia-related psychosis; borderline personality disorder.

DOSAGE FORMS:

Tablets: 0.25 mg, 0.5 mg, 1 mg, 2 mg, 3 mg, 4 mg.

DOSAGE GUIDANCE:

- Schizophrenia: Start 0.5 mg/day on days one through four, ↑ to 1 mg/day on days five through seven, then up to max 4 mg/day based on patient response. Usual dose 2–4 mg/day.
- Depression adjunct (indicated in adults only): Start 0.5 mg/day, ↑ at weekly intervals up to target 2 mg/day, max 3 mg/day.
- Dose timing: Like aripiprazole, can be taken in the morning or at night; may unpredictably cause drowsiness or insomnia.

MONITORING: Fasting glucose, lipids.

COST: \$\$\$\$

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Most common: Weight gain, akathisia, somnolence.
- Serious but rare: Rare reports of reversible pathologic gambling and other impulse control problems (eating, spending, sexual).

MECHANISM, PHARMACOKINETICS, AND DRUG INTERACTIONS:

- Dopamine D2 and serotonin 5HT1A receptor partial agonist and serotonin 5HT2A receptor antagonist.
- Metabolized by CYP2D6 and CYP3A4; t_{1/2}: 91 hours.
- Use ½ usual dose in presence of 2D6 or 3A4 inhibitors or in known 2D6 poor metabolizers; ¼ dose if both 2D6 inhibitor/poor metabolizer and 3A4 inhibitor; double dose if also using 3A4 inducer.

CLINICAL PEARLS:

- As the name suggests, brexpiprazole is chemically and structurally related to its manufacturer's previous blockbuster aripiprazole (Abilify).
- Although the FDA-approved target dose for schizophrenia is 2–4 mg/day, 2 mg/day was no better than placebo in one of two preclinical registration studies.
- Unlike aripiprazole, brexpiprazole may not be effective in bipolar mania. It was no better than placebo at reducing symptoms in about 650 adult patients enrolled in two studies in acute mania. One study compared weight gain from brexpiprazole to aripiprazole and found a similar increase of about 5–10 pounds over a year.
- Once-a-day dosing with no regard to meals makes this an easy-to-use option.
- Generic/brand name mnemonic: "Brex is Rex" (thanks to Dr. Raj Mago).

FUN FACT:

Plan on seeing more trial results with Rexulti in the future, including those in patients with ADHD, PTSD, and agitation associated with Alzheimer's dementia.