
VILAZODONE (Viibryd) Fact Sheet [G]

Bottom Line:

Vilazodone is essentially an SSRI with the addition of some buspirone-type effects. Early claims of sexual side effect advantages over other SSRIs are unproven. Disadvantages include the slow titration schedule, the need to take it with food in order to achieve a therapeutic blood level, and the many drug interactions. Until further notice, vilazodone should remain a second-line antidepressant.

FDA Indications:

Major depression.

Off-Label Uses:

OCD; other anxiety disorders.

Dosage Forms:

Tablets (G): 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg.

Dosage Guidance:

- Start 10 mg QD for seven days; ↑ to 20 mg QD for seven days, then to recommended dose of 20–40 mg QD (with food). Purpose of dose titration is to minimize GI effects.
- Must take with food, otherwise serum levels are reduced by up to 50%.
- Dose timing: Best taken in the morning due to activating effects.

Monitoring: No routine monitoring recommended unless clinical picture warrants.

Cost: \$\$

Side Effects:

- Most common: Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, insomnia, dizziness.
- Serious but rare: Possible hyponatremia or SIADH; use with caution in patients who are volume depleted, elderly, or taking diuretics.
- Pregnancy/breastfeeding: Not enough data to recommend.

Mechanism, Pharmacokinetics, and Drug Interactions:

- SSRI plus 5-HT1A partial agonist (buspirone is also a 5-HT1A partial agonist).
- Metabolized primarily through CYP3A4; $t_{1/2}$: 25 hours.
- Avoid use with MAOIs, other serotonergic agents. More CYP450 drug interactions possible with vilazodone than some other SSRIs. Use with 3A4 inhibitors or inducers may require dose adjustment.

Clinical Pearls:

- Sometimes marketed as having no or few sexual side effects, but FDA officials wrote an article for the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* clarifying that studies do not support this claim (Zhang J et al, *J Clin Psychiatry* 2015;76(1):8–14).
- Although the buspirone-like 5-HT1A effect suggests vilazodone may be especially effective in anxious depression, some patients report feeling a wired or somewhat stimulated effect like fluoxetine.
- Patients who experience nausea or activation, both dose-related effects, may not be able to reach a daily dose of 40 mg due to tolerability but may respond to 20–30 mg per day.

Fun Guess:

The brand name “Viibryd” likely has two origins. First, it rhymes with “hybrid,” and the mechanism of action is a hybrid of SSRI and 5-HT1A partial agonism. Second, the word calls to mind “virile,” which could be a subliminal suggestion that it does not worsen sexual functioning.