

Exopex®

Escitalopram Oxalate



Presentation:

Exopex® 5: Each film coated tablet contains Escitalopram oxalate equivalent to 5 mg Escitalopram in packs of 30 tablets.

Exopex® 10: Each film coated tablet contains Escitalopram oxalate equivalent to 10 mg Escitalopram in packs of 30 tablets.

Exopex® 15: Each film coated tablet contains Escitalopram oxalate equivalent to 15 mg Escitalopram in packs of 30 tablets.

Exopex® 20: Each film coated tablet contains Escitalopram oxalate equivalent to 20 mg Escitalopram in packs of 30 tablets.

Hospital packs are also available (500 and 1000).

Note: Not all pack sizes are available in all countries.

Excipients: Microcrystalline cellulose, Anhydrous colloidal silica, Croscarmellose sodium, Talc, Magnesium stearate, Opadry White.

Pharmaceutical form:

Film coated Tablets for oral use.

Pharmacotherapeutic group:

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) Antidepressants,

ATC code: N06AB10.

Therapeutic Indications:

Exopex® is used to treat depression (major depressive episodes) and anxiety disorders (such as panic disorder with or without agoraphobia, social anxiety disorder, generalised anxiety disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder).

Posology and method of administration:

Always take **Exopex®** exactly as your doctor has told you. You should check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

You can take **Exopex®** with or without food. Swallow the tablet with some water. Do not chew them, as the taste is bitter.

Adults: The starting dose of **Exopex®** is 5 mg as a single daily dose for the first week and the normally recommended dose of **Exopex®** is 10 mg taken as a single daily dose. The dose may be increased by your doctor to a maximum of 20 mg per day for the following cases:

- Depression.
- Panic disorder.
- Social anxiety disorder.
- Generalised anxiety disorder.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Elderly patients (above 65 years of age): The normally recommended starting dose of **Exopex®** is 5 mg taken as a single daily dose. The dose may be increased by your doctor to 10 mg per day.

Children and adolescents (below 18 years of age): **Exopex®** should not normally be given to children and adolescents. Also, you should know that patients under 18 have an increased risk of side effects such as suicide attempts, suicidal thoughts and hostility (predominately aggression, oppositional behaviour and anger) when they take this class of medicines. Despite this, your doctor may prescribe **Exopex®** for patients under 18 because he/she decides that this is in their best interest. You should inform your doctor if any symptoms listed above develop or worsen when patients under 18 are taking **Exopex®**. Also, the long term safety effects concerning growth, maturation and cognitive and behavioural development of escitalopram in this age group have not yet been demonstrated.

Patient Notes:

- It may take a couple of weeks before you start to feel better. Continue to take escitalopram even if it takes some time before you feel any improvement in your condition.
- Do not change the dose of your medicine without talking to your doctor first.
- If necessary, you can divide the tablets by firstly placing the tablet on a flat surface with the score facing upwards. The tablets may then be broken by pressing down on each end of the tablet, using both forefingers.
- Continue to take escitalopram for as long as your doctor recommends. If you stop your treatment too soon, your symptoms may return. It is recommended that treatment should be continued for at least 6 months after you feel well again.
- **Missed dose:** Do not take a double dose to make up for forgotten doses. If you do forget to take a dose, and you remember before you go to bed, take it straight away. Carry on as usual the next day. If you only remember during the night, or the next day, leave out the missed dose and carry on as usual.
- Do not stop taking escitalopram until your doctor tells you to do so. When you have completed your course of treatment, it is generally advised that the dose of escitalopram is gradually reduced over a number of weeks.
- When you stop taking escitalopram, especially if it is abruptly, you may feel discontinuation symptoms. These are common when treatment with escitalopram is stopped. The risk is higher, when escitalopram has been used for a long time or in high doses or when the dose is reduced too quickly.
- Most people find that the symptoms are mild and go away on their own within two weeks. However, in some patients they may be severe in intensity or they may be prolonged (2- 3 months or more). If you get severe discontinuation symptoms when you stop taking escitalopram, please contact your doctor. He or she may ask you to start taking your tablets again and come off them more slowly.
- Discontinuation symptoms include: Feeling dizzy (unsteady or off balance), feelings like pins and needles burning sensations and (less commonly) electric shock sensations, including in the head, sleep disturbances (vivid dreams, nightmares, inability to sleep), feeling anxious, headaches, feeling sick (nausea), sweating (including night sweats), feeling restless or agitated, tremor (shakiness), feeling confused or disoriented, feeling emotional or irritable, diarrhea (loose stools), visual disturbances, fluttering or pounding heartbeat (palpitations).

Contra-indications:

- If you have an allergy (hypersensitivity) to escitalopram or any of the other ingredients of **Exopex®**.
- If you take other medicines which belongs to a group called MAO inhibitors, including selegiline (used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease), moclobemide (used in the treatment of depression) and linezolid (an antibiotic).
- If you are born with or have had an episode of abnormal heart rhythm (seen at ECG)
- If you take medicines for heart rhythm problems or that may affect the heart's rhythm.

Warnings and Precautions for use

- SSRIs/SNRIs may increase the risk of postpartum haemorrhage.

Take special care with **Exopex®** Please tell your doctor if you have any other condition or illness, as your doctor may need to take this into consideration. In particular, tell your doctor:

- If you have epilepsy. Treatment with **Exopex®** should be stopped if seizures occur or if there is an increase in the seizure frequency.
- If you suffer from impaired liver or kidney function. Your doctor may need to adjust your dosage.
- If you have diabetes. Treatment with **Exopex®** may alter glycaemic control. Insulin and/or oral hypoglycaemic dosage may need to be adjusted.
- If you have a decreased level of sodium in the blood.
- If you have a tendency to easily develop bleedings or bruises.
- If you are receiving electroconvulsive treatment.
- If you have coronary heart disease.
- If you suffer or have suffered from heart problems or have recently had a heart attack.
- If you have a low resting heart-rate and/or you know that you may have salt depletion as a result of prolonged severe diarrhoea and vomiting or usage of diuretics.
- If you experience a fast or irregular heartbeat, fainting, collapse or dizziness on standing up, which may indicate abnormal functioning of the heart rate.

Note: Some patients with manic-depressive illness may enter into a manic phase. This is characterized by unusual and rapidly changing ideas, inappropriate happiness and excessive physical activity. If you experience this, contact your doctor.

Symptoms such as restlessness and/or being tired or standing still can also occur during the first weeks of the treatment. Tell your doctor immediately if you experience these symptoms.

- If you are depressed and/or have anxiety disorders you can sometimes have thoughts of harming or killing yourself. These may be increased when first starting antidepressants, since these medicines all take time to work, usually about two weeks but sometimes longer.

You may be more likely to think like this:

- If you have previously had thoughts about killing or harming yourself.
- If you are a young adult. Information from clinical trials has shown an increased risk of suicidal behaviour in adults aged less than 25 years with psychiatric conditions who were treated with an antidepressant.

You may find it helpful to tell a relative or close friend that you are depressed or have an anxiety disorder, and ask them to read this leaflet. You might ask them to tell you if they think your depression or anxiety is getting worse, or if they are worried about changes in your behaviour.

- As with many medicines, combining escitalopram with alcohol is not advisable, although escitalopram is not expected to interact with alcohol.
- You are advised not to drive a car or operate machinery until you know how escitalopram affects you.

Use During Pregnancy and Lactation:

Pregnancy: Pregnancy category C.

- Observational data indicate an increased risk (less than 2-fold) of postpartum haemorrhage following SSRIs/SNRIs exposure within the month prior to birth.

Inform your doctor if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. Do not take escitalopram if you are pregnant unless you and your doctor have discussed the risks and benefits involved.

If you take escitalopram during the last 3 months of your pregnancy you should be aware that the following effects may be seen in your newborn baby: Trouble with breathing, bluish skin, fits, body temperature changes, feeding difficulties, vomiting, low blood sugar, stiff or floppy muscles, vivid reflexes, tremor, jitteriness, irritability, lethargy, constant crying, sleepiness and sleeping difficulties. If your newborn baby has any of these symptoms, please contact your doctor immediately.

Make sure your midwife and/or doctor know you are on escitalopram When taken during pregnancy, particularly in the last 3 months of pregnancy, medicines like escitalopram may increase the risk of a serious condition in babies, called persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn (PPHN), making the baby breathe faster and appear bluish. These symptoms usually begin during the first 24 hours after the baby is born. If this happens to your baby you should contact your midwife and/or doctor immediately.

If used during pregnancy escitalopram should never be stopped abruptly.

Lactation: Do not take escitalopram if you are breast-feeding unless you and your doctor have discussed the risks and benefits involved.

Drug Interactions:

Please tell your doctor if you are taking or have recently taken any other medicines, including medicines obtained without prescription.

Tell your doctor if you taking any of the following medicines:

- Non-selective monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs): Containing phenelzine, iproniazid, isocarboxazid, nialamide, and tranlylpropine as active ingredients. If you have taken any of these medicines you will need to wait 14 days before you start taking escitalopram. After stopping escitalopram you must allow 7 days before taking any of these medicines.
- Reversible, selective MAO-A inhibitors, containing moclobemide (used to treat depression) and irreversible MAO-B inhibitors, containing selegiline (used to treat Parkinson's disease). These increase the risk of side effects.
- The antibiotic linezolid.
- Lithium and tryptophan.
- Imipramine and desipramine.

- Sumatriptan and similar medicines and tramadol. These increase the risk of side effects.

- Cimetidine and omeprazole, fluvoxamine and ticlopidine. These may cause increased blood levels of escitalopram.

- St. John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum) a herbal remedy used for depression.

- Acetylsalicylic acid and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. These may increase bleeding tendency.

- Warfarin, dipyridamole, and phenprocoumon. Your doctor will probably check the coagulation time of your blood when starting and discontinuing escitalopram in order to verify that your dose of anticoagulant is still adequate.

- Mefloquin, bupropion and tramadol due to a possible risk of a lowered threshold for seizures.

- Neuroleptics due to a possible risk of a lowered threshold for seizures, and antidepressants.

- Flecaidine, propafenone, and metoprolol, domipramine, and nortriptyline and risperidone, thioridazine, and haloperidol. The dosage of escitalopram may need to be adjusted.

Do not take escitalopram if you take medicines for heart rhythm problems or medicines that may affect the heart's rhythm, such as Class IA and III antiarrhythmics, antipsychotics (e.g. phenothiazine derivatives,

pimozide, haloperidol), tricyclic antidepressants, certain antimicrobial agents (e.g. sparflaxacin, moxifloxacin, erythromycin IV, pentamidine, anti-malarian treatment particularly halofantrine), certain antihistamines (astemizole, mizolastine). If you have any further questions about this you should speak to your doctor.

Undesirable effects:

Like all medicines, escitalopram can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them.

The side effects usually disappear after a few weeks of treatment. Please be aware that many of the effects may also be symptoms of your illness and therefore will improve when you start to get better.

See your doctor if you get any of the following side effects during treatment:

Uncommon (affects 1 to 10 users in 1000):

- Unusual bleeds, including gastrointestinal bleeds.

Rare (affects 1 to 10 users in 10000):

- If you experience swelling of skin, tongue, lips, or face, or have difficulties breathing or swallowing, contact your doctor or go to a hospital straight away.

- If you have a high fever, agitation, confusion, trembling and abrupt contractions of muscles these may be signs of a rare condition called serotonin syndrome. If you feel like this contact your doctor.

- If you experience the following side effects you should contact your doctor or go to the hospital straight away:

- Difficulties urinating.
- Seizures.
- Yellowing of the skin and the white in the eyes are signs of liver function impairment/hepatitis.
- Fast, irregular heart beat, fainting which could be symptoms of a life-threatening condition known as Torsade de Pointes.

In addition to above the following side effects have been reported:

Very common (affects more than 1 user in 10):

- Feeling sick (nausea).
- Common (affects 1 to 10 users in 100):**
- Blocked or runny nose (sinusitis).
- Decreased or increased appetite.
- Anxiety, restlessness, abnormal dreams, difficulties falling asleep, feeling sleepy, dizziness, yawning, tremors, prickling of the skin.
- Diarrhoea, constipation, vomiting, dry mouth.
- Increased sweating.
- Pain in muscle and joints (arthralgia and myalgia).
- Sexual disturbances (delayed ejaculation, problems with erection, decreased sexual drive and women may experience difficulties achieving orgasm).
- Fatigue, fever.

Increased weight.

Uncommon (affects 1 to 10 users in 1000):

- Nettle rash (urticaria), rash, itching (pruritus).
- Grinding one's teeth, agitation, nervousness, panic attack, confusion state.
- Disturbed sleep, taste disturbance, fainting (syncope).
- Enlarged pupils, visual disturbance, ringing in the ears (tinnitus).
- Loss of hair.
- Vaginal bleeding.
- Decreased weight.
- Fast heart beat.
- Swelling of the arms or legs.
- Nosebleeds.

Rare (affects 1 to 10 users in 10000):

- Aggression, depersonalisation, hallucination.
- Slow heart beat.

Some patients have reported (frequency cannot be estimated from the available data):

- Thoughts of harming yourself or thoughts of killing yourself.
- Decreased levels of sodium in the blood (the symptoms are feeling sick and unwell with weak muscles or confused).
- Dizziness when you stand up due to low blood pressure (orthostatic hypotension).
- Abnormal liver function test (increased amounts of liver enzymes in the blood).
- Movement disorders (involuntary movements of the muscles).
- Painful erections (priapism).
- Bleeding disorders including skin and mucous bleeding (ecchymosis) and low level of blood platelets (thrombocytopenia).

- Sudden swelling of skin or mucosa (angioedemas).

- Increase in the amount of urine excreted (inappropriate ADH secretion)

- Flow of milk in women that are not nursing.

- Mania.

- An increased risk of bone fractures has been observed in patients taking this type of medicines.

- Alteration of the heart rhythm (prolongation of QT interval).

In addition, a number of side effects are known to occur with drugs that work in a similar way to escitalopram. These are:

- Motor restlessness (akathisia)
- Anorexia

Frequency not known:

SOC Reproductive system and breast disorder: postpartum haemorrhage.(this event has been reported for the therapeutic class of SSRIs/SNRIs.

If any of the undesirable effects gets serious, or if you notice any undesirable effects not listed in this leaflet, please tell your doctor or pharmacist.

Overdose:

If you take more than the prescribed dose of escitalopram, contact your doctor or nearest hospital emergency department immediately. Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort. Some of the signs of an overdose could be dizziness, tremor, agitation, convulsion, coma, nausea, vomiting, change in heart rhythm, decreased blood pressure and change in body fluid/salt balance. Take the escitalopram box/container with you when you go to the doctor or hospital.

Pharmacological Properties:

Pharmacodynamic properties:

Escitalopram belongs to a group of antidepressants called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). These medicines act on the serotonin-system in the brain by increasing the serotonin level. Disturbances in the serotonin system are considered an important factor in the development of depression and related diseases.

Pharmacokinatic properties:

Absorption: Almost complete and independent of food intake. Mean time to maximum concentration (mean Tmax) is 4 hours after multiple dosing. As with racemic citalopram, the absolute bioavailability of escitalopram is expected to be about 80%.

Distribution: The apparent volume of distribution after oral administration is about 12 to 26 L/kg. The plasma protein binding is below 80% for escitalopram and its main metabolites.

Biotransformation: Escitalopram is metabolised in the liver to the demethylated and didemethylated metabolites. Both of these are pharmacologically active. Alternatively, the nitrogen may be oxidised to form the N-oxide metabolite. Both parent substance and metabolites are partly excreted as glucuronides. After multiple dosing the mean concentrations of the demethyl and didemethyl metabolites are usually 28-31% and <5%, respectively, of the escitalopram concentration. Biotransformation of escitalopram to the demethylated metabolite is mediated primarily by CYP2C19. Some contribution by the enzymes CYP3A4 and CYP2D6 is possible.

Elimination: The elimination half-life after multiple dosing is about 30 hours and the oral plasma clearance (Cl_{oral}) is about 0.6 L/min. The major metabolites have a significantly longer half-life. Escitalopram and major metabolites are assumed to be eliminated by both the hepatic (metabolic) and the renal routes, with the major part of the dose excreted as metabolites in the urine.

There is linear pharmacokinetics. Steady-state plasma levels are achieved in about 1 week. Average steady-state concentrations of 50 nmol/L (range 20 to 125 nmol/L) are achieved at a daily dose of 10 mg.

Elderly patients (> 65 years): Escitalopram appears to be eliminated more slowly in elderly patients compared to younger patients. Systemic exposure (AUC) is about 50 % higher in elderly compared to young healthy volunteers.

Reduced hepatic function: In patients with mild or moderate hepatic impairment (Child-Pugh Criteria A and B), the half-life of escitalopram was about twice as long and the exposure was about 60% higher than in subjects with normal liver function.

Reduced renal function: With racemic citalopram, a longer half-life and a minor increase in exposure have been observed in patients with reduced kidney function (Cl_{cr} 10-53 ml/min). Plasma concentrations of the metabolites have not been studied, but they may be elevated.

Polymorphism: It has been observed that poor metabolisers with respect to CYP2C19 have twice as high a plasma concentration of escitalopram as extensive metabolisers. No significant change in exposure was observed in poor metabolisers with respect to CYP2D6.

Special precautions for storage:

Store below 30°C.

This is a medicament

- A medicament is a product which affects your health, and its consumption contrary to instructions is dangerous for you.
- Follow strictly the doctor's prescription, the method of use and the instructions of the pharmacist who sold the medicament.
- The doctor and the pharmacist are experts in medicine, its benefits and risks.
- Do not by yourself interrupt the period of treatment prescribed for you.
- Do not repeat the same prescription without consulting your doctor.
- Keep medicament out of the reach of children.

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Al-Taqaddom Pharmaceutical Industries
Amman-Jordan



May, 2021
I-Exopex-EXX-LM0-R2/AE

