

Benzodiazepine Information Sheet

What is a benzodiazepine?

Benzodiazepines are medications that can help relieve symptoms of anxiety and can also be used to aid sleep.

How do they work?

They help to reduce the symptoms of anxiety or to improve sleep by making you feel more relaxed and helping you to fall asleep more quickly.

These medications fall in to 2 main groups:

1. Those used for anxiety

Examples: diazepam (Valium, Valpam, Antenex), oxazepam (Serepax, Alepam, Murelax), lorazepam (Ativan)

2. Those used for sleep

Examples: nitrazepam (Mogadon, Alodorm) and temazepam (Normison, Temaze, Temtabs)

Short term effects

They can help with anxiety and sleep in the short term however, they can cause confusion and daytime sleepiness as well as increasing your risk of falls and can affect your memory.



If you take these medications for less than 4 weeks you can stop them without any issues.



Long term effects

Taking these medications for longer than 4 weeks can cause your brain to “get used to them” and the benefits are reduced but you become dependent on them. You are also at continued risk of the side effects seen with short term use.

This means if you were to stop taking them suddenly you risk experiencing withdrawal symptoms.

Withdrawal symptoms can include a recurrence of the original symptoms you were taking this medication for as well as headaches and difficulty sleeping.

Why should I stop taking my benzodiazepines?

Benzodiazepines are only meant to be used in the short term due to the risk of tolerance and side effects.

Stopping these medicines can reduce your risk of falls and the subsequent injuries that you may experience, as well as improving your memory, reduce drowsiness and improve the quality of your life.

Stopping your benzodiazepines must be done in conjunction with your GP, nursing staff and family as the dose needs to be decreased slowly to minimise the risk of “withdrawal” symptoms.

How do I find out more information about RMMRs?

You can download the RMMR information sheet by clicking [here](#)

How can I apply for an RMMR?

If you would like an RMMR let the staff know at your home so they can provide you with the referral form, which you can give to your GP to sign, and a consent form for you or your substitute decision maker to complete.

Need help? We can support you in the process, just get in touch:

Call us today: 1800 927 366 Send us an email: info@wardmm.com.au Find out more online: www.wardmm.com.au