

Lowering your benzodiazepine dose

This fact sheet will support you to reduce your benzodiazepine medicine use.

What are benzodiazepines?

Benzodiazepines are medicines that may be used to treat sleep, anxiety and panic disorders. Examples include:

Active ingredient name	Brand names (examples)
Alprazolam	Alprax, Kalma, Xanax
Diazepam	Antenex, Valium, Valpam
Clonazepam	Rivotril, Paxam
Nitrazepam	Mogadon
Oxazepam	Serepax
Temazepam	Normison, Temaze

Why lower your benzodiazepine use?

Benzodiazepines can cause unwanted effects when used in the short and long term. These include:



Forgetfulness



Confusion



Falls



Dizziness

They can also cause:

- ▶ Tolerance to their effects, which stops the medicine from working as well.
- ▶ Dependence, where stopping suddenly could cause withdrawal symptoms.

Slowly stopping your benzodiazepine will improve your memory and thinking skills. It will also lower the risk of you feeling sleepy in the day and your chance of falling.

Avoiding withdrawal symptoms

- ▶ Slowly lowering the dose of your medicine will help lessen any withdrawal symptoms.
- ▶ These may include feeling anxious or depressed, poor focus, dizziness, muscle aches and pains, tremors ('the shakes'), sensitivity to light and/or sound and fatigue.
- ▶ As you reduce your tablets, trouble sleeping, or anxiety may return for a time. This does not mean that you still need your benzodiazepine.
- ▶ Your doctor will help you manage any symptoms or sleeping problems if they happen.

Set up regular reviews with your doctor

- ▶ It can take a few weeks to a few months to fully stop taking your medicine.
- ▶ Talk with your doctor about how to manage any changes in your mood, sleep, alcohol use, or amount you smoke.

Record your goals below to remind you of why you're stopping

To be completed by YOU:

Tick all that apply	Your goals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less daytime drowsiness
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lower risk of falls
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less need for benzodiazepines
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to _____

For:

(patient name)

ACTIONPLAN**Medicine name:** _____**Next appointment to review:** _____**To be completed by your DOCTOR:**

Indicate the daily dose to be taken

			Planned daily dose
Reduction 1	beginning	eg, 4th / April	eg, 1 tablet (5mg) in the morning and 1 tablet (5mg) in the evening
Reduction 1	beginning	/	
Reduction 2	beginning	/	
Reduction 3	beginning	/	
Reduction 4	beginning	/	
Reduction 5	beginning	/	

**To be completed by YOU:**

Record the average daily dose taken

			Daily dose taken	Comments/withdrawal symptoms
Reduction 1	beginning	eg, 4th / April	eg, two 5mg tablets	eg, I'm not sleeping as well but I'm coping
Reduction 1	beginning	/		
Reduction 2	beginning	/		
Reduction 3	beginning	/		
Reduction 4	beginning	/		
Reduction 5	beginning	/		

Tips when lowering your benzodiazepine

- ▶ Start your reduction plan when you are not feeling stressed.
- ▶ Keep in contact with your doctor to talk about how your lowering plan is going.
- ▶ Find someone to support you (eg, a friend or family member who is a good listener).
- ▶ Try not to drink alcohol, or keep the amount you drink to a small amount. Drinking alcohol as you reduce your medicine may make your withdrawal symptoms worse.

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