
Understanding Benzodiazepine Medicine

Benzodiazepines are a type of medicines used to treat several conditions. These include anxiety and insomnia. They slow the central nervous system. They lower the activity of brain signals to the body. They can make you feel sleepy and relaxed. They may be given as pills. Or they may be given as shots (injections) or through an IV (intravenous) in a hospital.

How to say it

behn-zoh-di-AZ-uh-peens

Benefits

Benzodiazepine medicines work well for anxiety disorders. These include:

- Acute anxiety
- General anxiety disorder
- Panic disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Social phobia

Benzodiazepine medicines also work well for:

- Trouble sleeping (insomnia)
- Seizure disorders
- Reducing muscle spasms in cerebral palsy or paralysis
- Reducing anxiety before surgery or chemotherapy

Risks

- **Withdrawal symptoms.** These may happen after long-time use.
- **Memory problems and falls.** They increase the risk of these in older adults who take them for a long time.
- **Addiction and abuse.** These medicines may be abused and used to get high. They may be used to come down from taking stimulants. When abused, they may be taken as pills. Or they may be crushed and then snorted or injected.
- **Interactions.** They may cause problems when used with other medicine, illegal drugs, or alcohol. This can lead to trouble breathing, overdose, and death.

Guidelines for use

The name of my benzodiazepine is:

You were prescribed a benzodiazepine. Make sure to:

- Read the fact sheet that came with your medicine. It tells you when and how to take your medicine. Ask for a sheet if you didn't get one.
- Tell your healthcare provider about all other medicines you take. This includes over-the-counter medicines. And it includes vitamins and herbal supplements.
- Take this medicine exactly as directed. Don't take a higher dose or take it more often without talking with your provider. Do this even if you think the medicine isn't working well. This medicine can be habit-forming when taken regularly. This is more of a risk if you take more than the prescribed amount.
- Don't stop taking this medicine without talking with your provider. If you want to stop taking it, they will need to help you taper off the medicine slowly and safely.
- Don't drink alcohol while taking this medicine.
- Don't take this medicine if you are pregnant or plan to be.
- Don't take antacids within 2 hours of taking this medicine. Antacids may make it harder for your body to absorb the medicine.
- Store this medicine in a cool area. Keep it in a safe place away from the reach of children.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your provider right away if you have any of these:

- Behavior changes
- Confusion
- Depression
- Convulsions (seizures)
- Hallucinations
- Worse nervousness, excitability, or irritability
- Movements of your body that you can't control, including your eyes
- Unusual weakness or tiredness
- Skin rash or itching
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Sore throat

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- Sores in your mouth or throat
 - Fever and chills