

Reducing your Benzodiazepines

ADVICE FOR PATIENTS

What are benzodiazepines?

Benzodiazepines are drugs that can reduce anxiety and help sleep problems. They should only be used for very short periods in patients with severe symptoms.

What are the effects?

Short term:

- Reduced alertness.
- Drowsiness. This may effect your ability to drive or operate machinery.
- Reduced tension and anxiety.

Long term:

- Dependence on the drug.
- Reduced alertness may lead to accidents or falls.
- Poorer memory.
- Lack of emotion.
- Tasks take longer to complete.
- The short-term effects continue.

What may happen when the drug is withdrawn?

- Your muscles may ache and strange sensations may be felt on the skin.
- You may feel restless and anxious.
- You may feel sick and weight loss may occur.
- You may sweat more than normal.
- You may have difficulty sleeping.
- You may feel more frightened or panicky. At first you can have a reduced ability to cope with stress.
- Eventually your anxiety will disappear and you will become more assertive.

Why does this happen?

Benzodiazepines in the brain block your emotional responses. When you reduce the drug, your brain becomes over-stimulated again. This can magnify your feelings and senses.

This is why your doctor will very slowly reduce your medication to ease the withdrawal process. Hopefully these side effects will be kept to a minimum