

**Benzodiazepine Practice Policy**

Benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam) have been used since the 1960s for a range of conditions, however over time it has become apparent that they are potentially addictive and unfortunately have become a well-known drug of abuse. Due to this, the prescribing and use of benzodiazepines has become a lot more controlled, especially in the UK – where currently diazepam is a Schedule IV Controlled Drug.

Some patients may have historically been given benzodiazepines to help calm them on flights or on holidays, however this is no longer felt to be best practice. The reasons for this are stated below:

* As diazepam is a sedative, it will often make you more sleepy and relaxed. Whilst emergencies on flights are rare, this would impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions, and react to the situation. This could have serious consequences for yourself or others around you.
* The use of any sedative medication can induce non-REM sleep which involves less movement, and therefore potentially increases the risk of developing a DVT (blood clot to the leg).
* A small number of patients taking benzodiazepines will actually have a reaction that makes them agitated and potentially aggressive. This could impact both your own safety as well as the safety of other passengers on a flight.
* Diazepam and similar medications are illegal in a number of countries. They may be confiscated or you may find yourself in trouble with the police.
* The British National Formulary (the reference guide for prescription of medicines in the UK), states that “the use of benzodiazepines to treat short-term ‘mild’ anxiety is inappropriate”. They are only recommended for short-term use for a crisis in generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) – fear of flying in isolation is not GAD.
* The BNF also states that use of benzodiazepines in phobias is contraindicated (not allowed).

We recognise that fear of flying is very real, frightening, and potentially disabling. Fortunately there are safer and more long-term approaches to tackling this. A number of airlines run Fear of Flying courses and so you may find it beneficial to look into these:

Fly and Be Calm – App available on Apple or Android devices

Easy Jet [www.fearlessflyer.easyjet. com](http://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com) Tel 0203 813 1644

British Airways <https://flyingwithconfidence.com/courses> Tel 01252 793 250

Virgin Atlantic <https://www.flyingwithoutfear.co.uk/> Tel 01423 714900