

Patient Education: Overview

Benzodiazepine

Patient's Name: _____

Date: _____

Your health care provider has talked with you about taking a benzodiazepine for your health condition. Here is more information to help you understand benzodiazepines and how the benzodiazepine you take might affect your body.

What is a benzodiazepine?

Benzodiazepines (ben-zo-di-az-eh-peens) are sometimes called "benzos." A benzodiazepine is a medicine given by your health care provider to help you to:

- Relax
- Go to sleep
- Not panic as much

Common benzodiazepine medicines are:

- Xanax (alprazolam)
- Ativan (lorazepam)
- Klonopin (clonazepam)
- Restoril (temazepam)
- Valium (diazepam)
- Serax (oxazepam)

Which benzodiazepine is best for me?

Your health care provider will choose a benzodiazepine that is best for your health condition. Which medicine is chosen may depend on:

- Your health conditions
- Your allergies
- Medicines used before
- Insurance coverage
- Your current medicines

How much medicine you take will depend on why you need a benzodiazepine. People with the same health condition may take a different benzodiazepine or a different amount of the same benzodiazepine.

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital immediately if you:

- Have chest pain
- Have trouble breathing
- Overdose
- Have a seizure
- Pass out
- Have sudden trouble seeing or hearing

Call your health care provider before your next visit if you:

- Feel side effects for more than one week
- Think you are addicted to your medication
- Think you are tolerant of your medication

The benzodiazepine you will take is:

How long will I take my benzodiazepine?

How long you take a benzodiazepine depends on why you are taking it. Benzodiazepines are meant to be taken for a short period of time. Most people take them for one to three weeks. Some people may need to take a benzodiazepine for a longer period of time.

You might take a benzodiazepine every day, or only on some days. It is important that you talk to your health care provider about how often you are taking your benzodiazepine. If the benzodiazepine is not helping your health condition, you may need to stop taking it. You may or may not change to a different benzodiazepine. Your health care provider will help you to know what is best for you.

How often will I need to see my health care provider?

Your health care provider will want to see you often while you are taking a benzodiazepine. This is to keep you safe and healthy. It helps your health care provider to know if the medicine is working. A visit also helps to check if you are having side effects or risks from your medicine. Your health care provider must also follow certain laws to keep you safe. To help keep you safe and healthy, your health care provider might ask you to:

- Sign a contract
- Take a urine or blood test
- Bring your pills to every visit

Your next visit is:

Your health care provider's phone number is:

See reverse for your medication change schedule.

For help finding substance abuse or mental health care in your area, please call **800-662-HELP (4357)**.

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Patient Education: Side Effects and Other Risks

Benzodiazepine

Your health care provider has talked with you about taking a benzodiazepine for your health condition. Taking a benzodiazepine can increase your chance of something unwanted happening. This is called a risk. Side effects are one type of risk. Some risks are more serious and can cause harm or injury. Here is more information to help you understand the serious risks of taking a benzodiazepine.

Risks of taking a benzodiazepine:

Brain Changes

Benzodiazepines can cause changes in your brain. This can make it hard for you to think or remember. You are also at higher risk for dementia or Alzheimer's. The longer you take a benzodiazepine, the more likely you are to get Alzheimer's.

Accidents

Benzodiazepines can make you feel dizzy or sleepy. You might also feel confused. This can make you more likely to fall. Older adults are more likely to break their hip when they fall. Driving a car when you feel dizzy, sleepy or confused may cause you to have a car accident.

Tolerance

Tolerance happens when your body gets used to the medicine you are taking. You might not feel like the medicine is helping you anymore. You might feel like you need more medicine to help you. Tolerance may lead to addiction.

Addiction

Addiction happens when you crave medicine even when your body does not need it. It can happen even if you have not been addicted before. Addiction may lead to overdose.

Overdose

Overdose happens when too much of one medication is in your body. It can also happen when you take many different medicines or someone else's medicine. Overdose may cause death.

Side effects of taking a benzodiazepine:

Not everyone feels side effects. Most side effects go away within one week. These are called short-term side effects. Some short-term side effects are:

- Feeling dizzy
- Feeling sleepy
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Trouble falling asleep
- Trouble concentrating

Some side effects do not go away while you are taking the medication. These are called long-term side effects. The most common long-term side effect is memory problems. Another long-term side effect is trouble sleeping. Long-term side effects may or may not go away when you stop taking a benzodiazepine. Your health care provider will help you manage short-term and long-term side effects.

Taking a benzodiazepine safely:

It is important to take your medicine exactly how your health care provider told you to take it. Taking more medicine, different medicine or someone else's medicine is unsafe.

Alcohol and opioids:

Do not take a benzodiazepine with alcohol or opioids. This can cause an overdose or an accident.

Call your health care provider right away if you think you may be tolerant or addicted to your medicine.

Your health care provider's phone number is:

For help finding substance abuse or mental health care in your area, please call **800-662-HELP (4357)**.

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