

## Is there anything else I can do?

You may find taking control of your treatment and devising the reduction regime with your Care Co-ordinator and your psychiatrist/doctor very helpful.

The use of a diary to help monitor the intake of Benzodiazepines is also recommended. You may also want to join a Self Help group.

## What happens after I have been detoxified from Benzodiazepines?

Usually people feel more mentally alert, notice an improvement in memory and feel better in themselves when they have detoxified.

You should notice a reduction in anxiety symptoms. Even reducing your dose can help improve your mental functioning and wellbeing.

## Illicit Benzodiazepines

- We are aware that Benzodiazepines can be purchased. You are risking your health if you buy unrestricted (foreign) medication.
- If you are getting yourself two prescriptions from different services for Benzodiazepines this is fraud against the NHS. You are likely to be found out, reported to the fraud department and may receive a custodial sentence.

**Anxiety and Stress Management courses are frequently run at local colleges.**

## For up-to-date workshops in your area contact:

Gloscat (Cheltenham & Gloucester)	0845 1552020
Stroud College	01453 761226
RFDC	01594 833416

## Support groups and contact details:

Gloucestershire Counselling Service	01453 766310
First Steps to Freedom <i>www.first-steps.org</i> <i>First.steps@btconnect.com</i>	0845 1202916
No Panic <i>www.nopanic.org.uk</i> <i>ceo@nopanic.org.uk</i>	0808 8080545
Changes <i>www.changes.org.uk</i> <i>changesrecoveryworkshops@yahoo.co.uk</i>	01782 280648

## Countywide Specialist Substance Misuse Service

West Gloucestershire Team	01452 891260
East Gloucestershire Team	01242 845614
Criminal Justice Drugs Team	01452 545779
Branchlea Cross	01242 845600

## Primary Care Substance Misuse Service

Countywide Team	01452 523151
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# Benzodiazepines

## **Benzodiazepines are drugs such as:**

- Diazepam
- Nitrazepam
- Lorazepam
- Oxazepam
- Temazepam

## **Why are they used?**

Benzodiazepines are very effective in the short-term treatment of insomnia, anxiety and for detoxifying people from alcohol.

They are not antidepressants (and should not be prescribed for more than three weeks at a time. If they are used for more than three weeks there is a risk that you could become addicted to them.

One third of people on longer term prescriptions will have withdrawal symptoms when the medication is reduced or stopped.

## **What are the symptoms of Benzodiazepines withdrawal?**

Withdrawal symptoms only occur in 33% of the population who have been prescribed Benzodiazepines for a long time. They include anxiety, problems sleeping, ringing in the ears (tinnitus), visual and taste disturbances, changes in weight and tremors.

The withdrawal symptoms are usually overcome by reducing the dose slowly or slowing down the rate of reduction.

## **What are the dangers of Benzodiazepines?**

Benzodiazepines are depressants. This means that, if taken in combination with other depressants like heroin or alcohol, they can lead to serious consequences such as loss of consciousness or death.

If alcohol is taken in combination with Benzodiazepines, or very large amounts of Benzodiazepines are used, this can lead to hostility and aggression. High doses of Benzodiazepines are not recommended for people treated with subutex/suboxone medication.

## **Benzodiazepines and pregnancy**

Benzodiazepines are not safe in pregnancy as they are associated with withdrawal symptoms and respiratory depression in newborn babies.

High doses should be avoided in the last three months of pregnancy. If you are taking Benzodiazepines whilst pregnant talk to your doctor about organising a reduction regime.

## **Driving and Benzodiazepines**

Using illicit (street) Benzodiazepines or being on high doses of Benzodiazepines will lead to you losing your driving licence as they will affect your reaction time.

## **Common side effects of Benzodiazepines**

The side effects of Benzodiazepines include drowsiness, dizziness, being unsteady on your feet and memory loss. They can dull your mental function and slow down your reaction time, making you more likely to have accidents, slips, trips and falls.

Reducing the dose (even by a small amount) can reduce your side effects.

## **I am addicted to Benzodiazepines, how can you treat me?**

The first step to help you is to stabilise you on a long-acting Benzodiazepine, usually Diazepam.

We recommend that you take the Diazepam once a day at the time that is right for you, i.e. when your symptoms are most troublesome.

When the transfer is complete and you feel stable the dose will gradually be reduced.

## **Detoxification**

Detoxification can sometimes take several weeks or months.

It is important that very high dose Benzodiazepines are not abruptly stopped as this may lead to epileptic type fits and/or acute anxiety. You are monitored carefully during your detox and your dose adjusted to reduce any problems with the detox.

## **Are other treatments recommended?**

Some people need help with anxiety or other mental health symptoms that might have been covered up by the Benzodiazepines.

You can get help with these difficulties through counselling, acupuncture, group work, day programmes and relaxation techniques.

Very occasionally people will require some antidepressants, tranquillisers or sleep medication.