

Patient Information Leaflet On Diazepam and Flying

Following discussion amongst the partners, and in line with best medical practice, it is practice policy that **benzodiazepine drugs (such as diazepam) will not be prescribed to treat fear of flying under any circumstances.**

We are aware that some patients have been given diazepam to take to help ease anxiety related to fear of flying in the past. However, there are many reasons why this is not in your best interests:

- These drugs are sedatives and can prevent people from being able to react in a safe and timely way in the event of an emergency. This can place not only the person having taken the drugs, but also all other occupants of the aircraft at risk if an emergency evacuation is required.
- Some people taking these drugs experience out of character aggressive behaviour, which again can be dangerous on a plane, but can also have significant legal implications as serious criminal punishments and lifelong airline bans can result from this behaviour.
- The effects of these drugs are exacerbated by mixing them with alcohol, which commonly occurs in those travelling, especially if they are already nervous fliers.
- Use of these medications tends to cause non-REM sleep, where the person does not move, and therefore increase the risk of blood clots when flying.
- These medications can cause respiratory depression, causing a drop in oxygen levels in the blood. Since even a normal healthy person tends to have oxygen saturations drop to 90% at 8000ft, the combined effect of the drug could be dangerous, especially in anyone with underlying lung disease or in combination with alcohol.
- In some countries, importing these medications is illegal, even with a valid prescription
- GP indemnity only covers treatment started within the UK. So even if a prescription was issued for the outbound journey, we would not be able to prescribe for the return trip so other coping strategies would need to be used
- According to guidance from NICE and the British National Formulary, these medications should only be used for short term treatment of generalized anxiety disorder, and are specifically not to be prescribed for phobic disorders
- These medications are highly addictive
- There is a possible association between use of these drugs and early onset dementia, and the exact frequency or doses needed to increase this risk are not currently known
- The sedation caused by these drugs can cause unsafe driving getting to or from the airport
- There is evidence that use of these drugs can prevent the normal adjustment response that occurs over time and lessens anxiety due to a repeated stimulus.

Therefore using these drugs can actually make the fear of flying worse than it would otherwise be over time

- Taking these medications may affect the validity of your travel insurance, especially if not declared to the insurance company
- These medications stay in your system for quite a while and could show up on any drug tests you subsequently need to take, for example for certain jobs

Rather than relying on these medications, we recommend one of the following fear of flying courses to help overcome the fear permanently

[https://fearlessflyer.easyjet.com/;](https://fearlessflyer.easyjet.com/)

[http://www.flyingwithoutfear.com/;](http://www.flyingwithoutfear.com/)

[http://flyingwithconfidence.com/;](http://flyingwithconfidence.com/)

<https://www.flyingwithoutfear.co.uk/>