



Benzodiazepines for Fear of Flying

This leaflet explains why Woodside Medical Practice is unable to prescribe **benzodiazepines** (such as diazepam) to patients for **fear of flying**. Many other GP practices have a similar policy.

- They are sedating drugs which can cause **safety** concerns
 - If you are drowsy, your reaction times may be slower and you may be **unable to act quickly** in an emergency on-board a flight
 - If you are drowsy you may move around less and sit for longer, increasing **the risk of a DVT** (blood clot) in the leg or even lung. This can have **serious** (even fatal) outcomes.
- They can cause **respiratory depression** (slower breathing rate) which can be dangerous as blood oxygen levels are already reduced at high altitude.
- It is possible that they can cause agitation and confusion which may put other passengers at risk.
- They are a controlled (regulated) drug in the UK and we must prescribe medications **safely**:
 - The use of benzodiazepines to treat phobia (fear) is contraindicated (ie. not allowed) – this is the advice given in the BNF (drug formulary) which is the manual used for information about drugs.
 - They are only indicated for severe or disabling anxiety – we would not advocate flying if a patient was suffering from this.
- Benzodiazepines are illegal in some countries meaning you may risk breaking the law if you take these medications with you.
- They should not be mixed with alcohol which may be available to buy on or before a flight.

We appreciate patients may have a genuine fear of flying. Several of the big UK-based airlines provide 'Fear of Flying' courses which you may wish to investigate.

Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Woodside Medical Practice