|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Document** | **Prescribing of Benzodiazepines** |
| **Author** | **Haider Ali** |
| **Date** | **March 2025** |
| **Approved by** | **Board** |
| **Review date** | **March 2027** |

**Prescribing of Benzodiazepines - The Street Lane Practice**

As part of our commitment to providing the best possible care for our patients, The Street Lane Practice have made the decision to no longer prescribe benzodiazepines for fear of flying.

This change has been informed by current research, national guidelines, and our ongoing efforts to ensure patient safety, well-being, and long-term health. We will explain the reasons below behind this decision and offer alternative treatments to help.

1. **National Guidelines and Best Practice**

The decision to stop prescribing benzodiazepines aligns with national guidelines, which emphasise caution in the use of these drugs. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) suggest that medication should not be used for mild and self-limiting mental health disorders. According to the prescribing guidelines doctors follow, British National Formulary (BNF), diazepam is contraindicated (not allowed) in treating phobic states. It also states that “the use of benzodiazepines to treat short-term ‘mild’ anxiety is inappropriate.” Your doctor would therefore be taking a significant legal risk by prescribing against these guidelines.

1. **Side Effects and Safety Risks**

Benzodiazepines are associated with a range of side effects. These include drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, and impaired coordination. The use of any sort of benzodiazepines causes longer reaction times & slowed thinking, which during a flight will put the passenger at significant risk of not being able to act in a manner which could save their life, or that of a loved one or co-passenger, in the event of a safety critical incident. Incapacitation from benzodiazepines is a risk to the lives of all on board the aircraft in the event of an emergency requiring evacuation.

Additionally, the use of such sedative medications can make you fall asleep in an unnatural non-REM sleep. This results in you not moving around as much as during natural sleep which can cause you to be at an increased risk of developing a blood clot (Deep Vein Thrombosis – DVT) in the leg or even the lungs. Blood clots are very dangerous and can even prove fatal and this risk is even greater if your flight is greater than 4 hours.

Whilst most people find benzodiazepines like diazepam sedating, a small number have paradoxical agitation and aggression. They can also cause disinhibition and lead you to behave in a way that you would not normally. This could impact on your safety as well as that of other passengers.

1. **Safer and More Effective Alternatives**

In recent years, several alternative treatments for anxiety and phobias, including fear of flying, have been shown to be more effective and safer than benzodiazepines. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is the gold standard for treating anxiety disorders, including specific phobias like fear of flying. CBT helps patients identify and challenge irrational thoughts and fears, and it incorporates exposure techniques to gradually reduce anxiety. For many patients, just a few sessions of CBT or specialised fear of flying programs (such as aviation-specific therapy) can significantly improve their ability to manage flying-related anxiety.

In some cases, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or other non-habit-forming medications may be prescribed for patients who require pharmacological support for anxiety, particularly when fear of flying is part of a broader anxiety disorder. These medications do not carry the same risks of dependence and are more suited for long-term management.

Given the above we are no longer prescribing benzodiazepines for flying. Instead, we will focus on evidence-based treatments that address the underlying causes of anxiety and phobias, such as CBT and other non-habit-forming medications.

We also would suggest the below aviation industry recommended flight anxiety courses which are easily accessible for those who wish to fly & conquer their fear of flying:

**Easy Jet** - [**Fear of flying course | Fearless Flyer (easyjet.com)**](https://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com/)

**British Airways** - [**Flying with Confidence | Special assistance | British Airways**](https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/travel-assistance/flying-with-confidence)

**Flying Without Fear** - [**Flying Without Fear | Courses to Conquer Your Fear of Flying**](https://www.flyingwithoutfear.com/)

Patients who still wish to take benzodiazepines for flight anxiety are advised to consult with a private GP or travel clinic. It is important to declare all medical conditions and medications you take to your travel insurer. If not, there is a risk of nullifying any insurance policy you may have.

1. **Prescribing for Dental Procedures**

Dentists should not direct patients to GPs requesting they prescribes sedating medications, such as diazepam. If a dentist wishes to prescribe sedating medications for anxious patients that dentist should be responsible for issuing the prescription. The dental practitioner’s formulary, which is the list of drugs a dentist can prescribe is found on the [BNF dental practitioners formulary](https://bnf.nice.org.uk/dental-practitioners-formulary/), includes Diazepam Tablets and Oral Solution.

If the dentist is treating a patient within their practice NHS contract, then the prescription should be on a FP14D form. If the dentist is treating a patient privately, they should issue a private prescription. Dentists may contact a GP for information or advice, if, for example the patient has a complex medical history.