

Signs of Addiction and Abuse of Benzodiazepines

- Factors which influence addiction and withdrawal include, total daily dose, duration of use and the potency of the drug
- Continuation of use after need has passed
- Amounts larger than prescribed are taken
- Taking the drug to reach a state of euphoria or to decrease self awareness
- Signs or feelings of manic depression and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Hallucinations and delusions
- Delirium, hypothermia, convulsions and drug induced psychosis.



Withdrawal Symptoms

- Headaches
- Aching or twitching muscles
- Sweating
- Bizarre dreams
- Fatigue
- Heightening of sight, touch, hear, taste and feel
- Difficulty concentrating
- Nausea, vomiting and stomach pains



If you, or someone you know, is struggling with an addiction, please contact your local addiction, mental health or medical facility for further information and help. Remember, you are not alone.

Benzodiazepine



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What are Benzodiazepines?

Benzodiazepines were primarily introduced as “tranquillizers” because they produce a feeling of calmness. They are drugs which are usually prescribed to treat anxiety, nervousness, muscle relaxation, seizures and insomnia. There are over 300 different kinds of benzodiazepines. They can create dependence and are usually recommended for short-term use only. They are one of the most frequently prescribed drugs world wide. One of the mostly wide used benzodiazepine is Valium. Street names for Valium include tranks, downers, blue bombs or V's.

Common Benzodiazepines

- Valium (Diazepam) - available as tablets and injectable solution
- Serax (Oxazepam) - available as tablets
- Ativan (Lorazepam) - available as tablets and injectable solution
- Xanax (Alprazolam) - available as tablets
- Rohypnol (Flunitrazepam) - “date rape drug.” Available in tablets.

Central Nervous System

Depressant

- Central Nervous System (CNS) depressants are drugs that cause a slowing down or depression of the central nervous system.
- At low doses they produce a feeling of calm, drowsiness and well-being.

- Regular use of CNS depressants can result in physical and psychological dependence.

Short-Term Effects

- Feeling of well-being or relaxation
- Loss of inhibitions
- Decreased muscle tension and loss of coordination
- Reduced mental alertness, impaired coordination and balance
- Low blood pressure and fainting
- Side effects of short term use include skin rashes, nausea, and dizziness
- In some rare occasions paradoxical rage, sleep disturbances and personality changes can occur
- Driving motor vehicles and operating heavy machinery should be avoided at all times
- It is extremely hazardous to take them together with alcohol, other CNS depressants and antihistamines (allergy and cold remedies)

Long-Term Effects

- Prolonged use of benzodiazepines can result in impairment in thinking, memory loss, impaired judgment, confusion, disorientation and impaired motor coordination.

- Prolonged use may lead to reduced, rather than decreased, aggressiveness in some people.
- Headache, irritability, depression, insomnia and tremor.
- Liver damage, respiratory depression, and interference with regular sleep and sexual function.
- When used during pregnancy they cross the placenta and are distributed to the fetus. After, birth babies will experience withdrawal and have the risk of major malformations and cleft palate.

Tolerance and Dependence

- Tolerance to the sedatives effects of benzodiazepines can develop with regular use over a month, as can psychical and psychological dependence.
- May become ineffective for use as sleeping pills and as anti-anxiety agents.
- Stopping use abruptly may result in sleep disturbances, headache, tension, difficulty concentrating, trembling, severe anxiety and tiredness.
- Withdrawal from high doses may result in seizures, depression, paranoia, agitation, delirium, vivid nightmares and life threatening convulsions.