

Medication Information Sheet



Benzodiazapines

clonazepam, lorazepam, diazepam, Klonopin, Valium, Ativan and others

Medications are only ONE part of a successful treatment plan. They are appropriate when they provide benefit, improve function and have either no or mild, manageable side effects. Importantly, medications (even if natural) are chemical substances not expected in the body, and as such have side effects. Some of the side effects might be unknown. The use of medications/drugs for any purpose requires patient consent. This practice does NOT require a patient to use any medication.

Information & potential benefits

Benzodiazapines work by increasing the action of a specific chemical receptor in the brain. They are used to treat anxiety disorders, seizure disorders, some muscle spasm disorders and as a short term sleep aid. It is used by some providers as an adjunctive (helper) medication. Long-acting benzodiazapines may be used as sedation for medical procedures.

Potential risks and side effects

Common and basic side effects include drowsiness; uncoordination; muscle weakness; tiredness. Seek medical attention if you experience the following; severe allergic reactions (rash; hives; itching; difficulty breathing; tightness in the chest; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue), confusion, difficulty breathing, fever, chills; hallucinations inability to control urination or difficulty urinating, memory problems or memory loss, new or worsening mental or mood changes (eg, agitation, aggressiveness, behavior changes, depression, irritability, rage, restlessness), severe or persistent dizziness or lightheadedness, slurred speech, tremor, trouble sleeping, yellowing of the skin or eyes. When used for long periods of time or at high doses, this medicine may not work as well and may require higher doses to obtain the same effect as when originally taken. This is known as **TOLERANCE**. Talk with your doctor if this medicine stops working well. **Do not take more than prescribed**. Some people who use this medicine for a long time may develop a need to continue taking it. People who take high doses are also at risk. This is known as **DEPENDENCE**. If you stop taking this medicine suddenly, you may have **WITHDRAWAL** symptoms. These may include convulsions, tremor, stomach and muscle cramps, vomiting, or sweating. Do not suddenly stop taking this medicine without first checking with your doctor. This medication is especially dangerous in patients with a history of alcoholism or abuse.

Dosing information

Benzodiazapines come in a variety of forms including oral, injectable, suppository, and IV. The doses vary widely because of the different potencies of medications. Some are long-acting and some are short acting. Regardless of type, the smallest dose that achieves the desired effect should be used and the medications should be only used for short periods of time to avoid dependence and tolerance.

Important information

Disclaimer: This is for informational purposes only. This does not replace the instructions you received from your provider, does not constitute initiation of medical treatment or establishment of a patient-physician relationship, does not constitute any form of recommendation, prescription or medical advice, and does not imply that the medication is appropriate or FDA approved for any condition. This information is not a complete listing of instructions, doses, uses or side effects. If this was prescribed to you, you must review this information with your pharmacist and prescriber before starting the medication. Any medication may interfere with the ability to drive, concentrate or operate machinery; patients must be responsible for their own behavior and should not engage in any dangerous activity if there is any question of impairment. All medications have side effects and drug interactions, some serious, some fatal. Let all of your practitioners and pharmacists know about every substance used. Alcohol, herbals or illegal drugs are not considered safe with these medications. Assume no medication is safe during pregnancy or while breast feeding. The medication may interfere with birth control. Almost any medication can cause sleepiness, insomnia, dizziness, confusion, hallucinations, anxiety, panic, constipation or diarrhea, headache, chest pain and nausea or vomiting, among others. Most medications should NOT be stopped suddenly because of the risk of withdrawal.