

Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or fear. It is your body's natural reaction to some stressful or dangerous situations. It focuses your attention and can help you react.

A healthy amount of anxiety is OK. But anxiety can sometimes build up over time and be difficult to manage.

Tips to help with anxiety

- Make a list of the things you are anxious about. Write a plan if you think there are things you can do to help
- If you feel anxious, it can help to talk to a friend or family member about how you feel
- If your worry is overwhelming, set aside an amount of 'worry time' to go through your worries each day
- Fit things into your day that help you unwind e.g. listening to music, going for a walk
- Physical activity can help you relax and feel better
- Breathing exercises can help you manage strong emotions and reduce stress
- Healthier food choices can improve your mental and physical health
- Manage your screen time
- Cutting back on alcohol can make you feel better physically and mentally.

For more advice on anxiety, visit yourmentalhealth.ie

Support

Visit yourmentalhealth.ie for information on how to mind your mental health, support others, or to find a support service in your area.

You can also call the HSE Your Mental Health Information Line on 1800 111 888, anytime day or night, for information on mental health services in your area.

Talk to your doctor or mental health professional if:

- you are finding it hard to cope
- anxiety or a sleeping problem is having a negative affect on your day-to-day life
- your anxiety or sleeping problem has been going on for a while or is getting worse.



MEDICINES FOR INSOMNIA AND ANXIETY

PATIENT GUIDE



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health



Comhairle na nDochtúirí Leighis
Medical Council



Bord Altranaís agus
Cnóimhseachais na hÉireann
Nursing and Midwifery
Board of Ireland



01.2023



What are benzodiazepines and z-drugs?

Benzodiazepines are a group of medicines that can be prescribed to help with sleeping problems (insomnia), or severe anxiety.

Z-drugs can be prescribed to help with sleeping problems.

Benzodiazepines and z-drugs may work well for a short period of time (a few days to four weeks).

If you use them for longer, the medicine may lose its effect and you may become dependent.

Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about your benzodiazepine and z-drug use. They can help you to reduce your dose slowly.

Do not stop taking a benzodiazepine or z-drug suddenly.

Patient information leaflets for medicines are available on hpra.ie or from your pharmacist.

Why is my doctor reluctant to prescribe these medicines?

Clumsiness and drowsiness

People taking these medicines are more likely to have a fall.

Your ability to drive safely may be reduced by these medicines.

Tolerance and addiction

Your body may get used to the effect of these medicines very quickly, and they may no longer be effective.

Some people may become addicted to benzodiazepines and z-drugs, which may make it difficult to stop taking them.

Withdrawal symptoms can occur if the medicine is stopped suddenly. These include anxiety, headaches, restlessness and sweating.

Mental health changes

Some people taking these medicines can become aggressive, agitated and confused.

If you are experiencing any side-effects from benzodiazepines or z-drugs, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Do not stop taking a benzodiazepine or z-drug without talking to your doctor first.

Sleep problems

Sleep problems are common and usually get better within a few weeks. Try not to worry if your sleep is disturbed for a short while.

Tips to help you sleep better

Getting into a good sleep pattern may take weeks. You can do it by making small changes at a time.

- Stick to a sleep routine; go to bed and get up at the same time every day
- Create a relaxing space for sleeping
- Relax before bed e.g. have a warm bath or do gentle stretches
- Calm a racing mind before bed e.g. read a book, write a to-do list
- If you cannot sleep, get up and do something you find relaxing. But keep the light levels low. When you feel sleepy again, go back to bed.
- Regular physical activity is a great way to improve your sleep.

Avoid

- Naps during the day
- Staying up late for 'me time'
- Vigorous physical activity in the hour before you go to bed
- Drinking alcohol in the evenings
- Drinking caffeine 4 to 6 hours before bed
- Eating a large meal 3 to 4 hours before bed.

For more advice on sleep problems, visit yourmentalhealth.ie