

Medication Information

Benzodiazepines

**Valium (diazepam), Librium (chlordiazepoxide), Ativan (lorazepam)
Klonopin (clonazepam), Xanax (alprazolam), Tranxene (clorazepate)
Restoril (temazepam), Serax (oxazepam)**

Benzodiazepines are a group of medications used to treat anxiety disorders. The daily dosage varies among the different specific drugs.

Precautions: Benzodiazepines can be habit-forming when taken regularly, especially if more than the prescribed amount is used, and sudden discontinuation may lead to withdrawal symptoms. They should be used with extreme caution in people with a history of substance abuse, and they should never be taken along with alcohol or street drugs. Because benzodiazepines can cause drowsiness and dizziness, do not drive or operate heavy machinery until you know how you will be affected. If there is a possibility you may become pregnant or breast feed, consult with your physician.

Interactions may occur with the following medications: antacids, Tagamet, Antabuse, Digoxin, Rifampin, and the "natural" tranquilizer, Kava Kava. Cigarette smoking may alter the effectiveness of benzodiazepines.

Common side effects include: sedation, dizziness, poor memory, impaired attention, and balance problems. Other adverse effects not listed here may occur. Contact your physician if you develop any unusual or disturbing symptoms.

Alternative Treatments: Other medications used to treat anxiety include serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs), Buspar, beta-blockers, and low doses of antipsychotics. Certain "natural" substances have been found helpful in reducing anxiety (usually milder forms). These are not as well studied, may be manufactured with less quality control than medications, can cause adverse reactions, and are usually less predictably effective than medication. They include St John's Wort, 5-HTP, GABA, L-glutamine, Valerian root, and Kava Kava. Also, various forms of psychotherapy are often beneficial. Left untreated, anxiety disorders tend to become more severe and chronic.