

ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS

Other names:

Valium , Xanax ,
Librium, Ativan,
Halcion, Ambien
Dalmane, tranks,
downers, sleeping
pills, nerve pills

How it is used:

swallowed or
crushed and
snorted

What it looks like:

tablets

Anti-anxiety drugs (benzodiazepines) are medications prescribed by doctors to relieve the symptoms of anxiety and sleep disorders. They are sometimes used to treat seizure disorders and to relieve the initial symptoms of alcohol withdrawal. They can also be used as sedatives before surgical procedures.

› The first benzodiazepines were marketed in the 1960s. In the early 1980s Valium® (diazepam) was the most widely prescribed drug in the world. Now, newer drugs such as Ativan® and Xanax® account for most benzodiazepine prescriptions.

What it Does: Benzodiazepines relieve anxiety and insomnia when used as prescribed. They are generally well-tolerated and have a wide margin of safety. But even when used as directed, these drugs can have dangerous side effects. The user may experience drowsiness, dizziness, and lack of coordination that make driving or operating machinery dangerous. When combined with certain cold and allergy remedies, benzodiazepines can produce a dangerous level of sedation.

Some benzodiazepines are metabolized and eliminated slowly from the body, causing a build-up. Elderly persons are particularly sensitive to the effects of high levels of these drugs. Falls and other accidents can occur due to dizziness and unsteadiness. Benzodiazepines can be toxic when combined with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants.

When taken over a long period of time, dependence often occurs. Stopping the drug abruptly can result in insomnia, nervousness, gastrointestinal problems, and occasionally seizures. Anti-anxiety drugs should only be taken on a doctor's advice and in the dosage prescribed. It is dangerous to take anyone else's prescription medications.

Effects on the mind and body:

- sleepiness
- dry mouth
- increased appetite
- dizziness
- impaired coordination
- amnesia; sleepwalking
- extreme sedation, coma, or death when combined with alcohol and other depressants

Support Groups in Lancaster County:

Alcoholics Anonymous (717) 394-3238
Narcotics Anonymous (717) 393-4546
Al-Anon (for family & friends) (877) 298-5027



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