

DIAZEPAM POLICY

Medication Prescribing for Fear of Flying and Medical Procedures

Our practice has reviewed national prescribing guidance on benzodiazepines including diazepam¹. To prioritise patient and practice safety, we have decided that we are not able to prescribe diazepam or other similar medications for fear of flying, MRI scans, dental procedures, minor surgery, or similar situations. This policy outlines why we have made this decision and alternative pathways for help.

1. Fear of Flying

Patients sometimes request diazepam or similar medications to help with anxiety or sleep during flights. Updated national safety guidance advises against this due to several significant risks:

- Safety in emergencies: These medications can slow reactions times, affecting ability to respond in an emergency.
- DVT risk: Sedation reduces movement, increasing blood clot risk.
- Paradoxical reactions: Some experience agitation or disinhibition.
- Alcohol interaction: Even small amounts significantly increase sedation risk.
- Legal issues: Diazepam is illegal to carry into several countries.
- Workplace testing: It may remain detectable for extended periods.
- Long-term risks: Dependence, withdrawal, memory impairment, balance problems, dementia risk.

Our genuine belief is that patients are more likely to benefit long term from CBT type approaches. Further support for managing flying anxiety can be found at:

- Patient.info – How to Manage Flight Anxiety: <https://patient.info/features/mental-health/how-to-manage-flight-anxiety>

2. Medical Procedures (MRI, CT, dental work, eye surgery)

Patients sometimes also request diazepam or similar medications before medical procedures. There are a number of reasons why we have decided this is not appropriate:

- Responsibility: Hospital teams should manage sedation for their procedures.
- Safety: Sedation requires monitoring by trained staff, not available in general practice.

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- Unexpected reactions: Some individuals may become agitated.

Who to contact instead:

- Hospital scans: contact the requesting department.
- Dental procedures: sedation must be arranged by the dentist.
- Operations: the surgical/clinical team must provide sedation.

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- ⁱ BNF: Diazepam is contraindicated for phobic states and short-term mild anxiety.
 - NICE NG215: Advises against benzodiazepines for mild, self-limiting or situational anxiety.