

## Benzodiazepine Poisoning - A Guide for Patients



Dear Patient,

Wishing you health and well-being.

This content is provided to help you understand benzodiazepine poisoning and the necessary care measures. We hope that by reading this material, you can manage your treatment well.

Benzodiazepines are commonly known as nerve or sleeping pills used at home.

These drugs usually come in the form of tablets or capsules in various colors and are taken orally. A few types are available as injectable solutions.

Benzodiazepines are used for treating insomnia, anxiety, muscle relaxation, panic attacks, epilepsy, alcohol withdrawal, sleep disorders, and more.

Depending on their onset of action and half-life, benzodiazepines are classified as:

- Short-acting (e.g., Midazolam, Alprazolam)
- Intermediate-acting (e.g., Clonazepam)

- Long-acting (e.g., Diazepam, Chlordiazepoxide)

Are benzodiazepines dangerous?

If used as prescribed, for a limited time (a few weeks or months), they are generally safe.

However, they can impair the ability to drive or operate machinery, especially when combined with alcohol or other sedatives, increasing the risk of accidents.

High doses of benzodiazepines typically only cause altered consciousness and usually require supportive care.

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Poisoning may be more dangerous in cases where:

- They are taken with another sedative, or
- The patient has underlying medical conditions.

Do benzodiazepines pass into breast milk?

Yes. They can be transmitted to the baby through breast milk.

In Case of Benzodiazepine Poisoning:

1. Transfer the patient to a medical facility.
2. Ensure airway is open (remove secretions, dentures, etc.).
3. Establish IV access.
4. Stomach wash and inserting nasogastric tube if needed.
5. Administer activated charcoal and sorbitol if indicated.

6. Monitor vital signs, provide fluid therapy, and stabilize the patient.

Are benzodiazepines addictive?

In some individuals, especially those with certain conditions, benzodiazepines can lead to psychological or physical dependence.

1. The risk of dependence increases when benzodiazepines are used regularly for several months, particularly in high doses.
2. Tolerance may develop, requiring higher doses for the same effect.

For those who become dependent, quitting suddenly can cause

withdrawal symptoms, especially in individuals with physical dependence.

Withdrawal severity depends on the type of drug, dosage, duration of use, and whether the discontinuation is abrupt.

Common withdrawal symptoms include:

Headache, insomnia, anxiety, sweating, difficulty concentrating, tremors, stomach upset, loss of appetite, irritability and fear.

Discontinuation must be gradual and under medical supervision.

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## **Benzodiazepine Poisoning - A Guide for Patients**

Sources: Brunner & Suddarth's  
Medical-Surgical Nursing

NHS Official Website ([www.nhs.com](http://www.nhs.com))

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