

Practice stance on prescribing of Diazepam for Fear of Flying

At Knebworth & Marymead Medical Practice, we will not prescribe Diazepam for patients who wish to use this for a fear of flying. We have made this decision due to the following reasons:

1. Diazepam is a sedative. This means, the medication makes you sleepy and more relaxed. If there were to be an emergency during the flight, this could impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions or react to the situation. This could seriously affect the safety of you and the people around you.
2. Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however, when you sleep it is an unnatural non-REM sleep. This means, your movements during sleep are reduced and this can place you at an increased risk of developing blood clots (DVT). These blood clots are very dangerous and can even prove fatal. This risk further increases if your flight is over 4 hours long.
3. Although most people respond to benzodiazepines like Diazepam with sedation, a small proportion experience the opposite effect and can become aggressive. They can also lead to disinhibition and make you behave in ways you normally wouldn't. This could also impact on your safety and the safety of your fellow passengers or could lead you to get in trouble with the law.
4. National prescribing guidelines followed by doctors also don't allow the use of benzodiazepines in cases of phobia. **Any doctor prescribing diazepam for a fear of flying would be taking a significant legal risk as this goes against these guidelines.** Benzodiazepines are only licensed for short-term use in a crisis in generalised anxiety. If this is the problem you suffer with, you should seek proper care and support for your mental health, and it would not be advisable to go on a flight.
5. In several countries, diazepam and similar drugs are illegal. They would be confiscated, and you might find yourself in trouble with the police for being in control of an illegal substance.
6. Diazepam has a long half-life. This means it stays in your system for a significant time and you may fail random drug testing if you are subjected to such testing as is required in some jobs.

We appreciate a fear of flying is very real and very frightening and can be debilitating. However, there are much better and effective ways of tackling the problem. We recommend you tackle your problem with a Fear of Flying Course, which is run by several airlines. These courses are far more effective than diazepam, they have none of the undesirable effects and the positive effects of the courses continue after the courses have been completed.

Fear of Flying Courses

Easy Jet

www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com

Tel: 0203 8131644

British Airways

<http://flyingwithconfidence.com/courses/>

Tel: 01252 793 250

Virgin Atlantic

<https://flyingwithoutfear.co.uk/collections>

Tel: 01423 714900 1252250

Disclaimer:

Flight anxiety does not come under the remit of General Medical Services as defined in the GP contract and so we are not obliged to prescribe for this and cannot accept any liability for any damages resulting from not doing so.

Patients who still wish to take benzodiazepines for flight anxiety are advised to consult with a private GP or travel clinic.

It is important to declare all medical conditions and medications you take to your travel insurer. If not, there is a risk of nullifying any insurance policy you may have.