

Medications for Flying Policy



The use of Benzodiazepines (and related medications such as Diazepam) for flying.

West4GPs does not prescribe benzodiazepine medication for fear of flying.

This policy decision has been made by the GP Partners and is adhered to by all prescribers working in the practice. The reasons for this can be found below:

- Benzodiazepines such as diazepam are sedatives which means they make you sleepy and more relaxed. If there is an emergency during the flight it may impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions and react to the situation. This could have serious safety consequences for you and those around you.
- Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when this sleep occurs it is an unnatural non-REM sleep. This means you won't move around as much compared to natural sleep. This can cause you to be at increased risk of developing a blood clot (DVT) in the leg or even the lung. Blood clots are very dangerous and can even prove fatal. This risk is even greater if your flight is greater than four hours.
- Whilst most people find benzodiazepines sedating, a small number have paradoxical agitation and aggression. They can also cause disinhibition and lead you to behave in a way that you would not normally. This could impact on your safety, as well as that of other passengers, and could also get you into trouble with the law.
- According to the prescribing guidelines that our doctors follow (the BNF), Benzodiazepines are contraindicated (not allowed) in phobia. They are only licensed short term for a crisis in generalised anxiety. If this is the case, you should be getting proper care and support for your mental health and not going on a flight.
- Diazepam and similar drugs are illegal in a number of countries. They may be confiscated or you may find yourself in trouble with the police.
- Diazepam stays in your system for quite a while. If your job requires you to submit to random drug testing you may fail this having taken diazepam. Although we would not medically advise, patients who still wish to take benzodiazepines for flight anxiety can consult with a private GP or travel clinic who may be happy to prescribe.

We appreciate that fear of flying is very real and very frightening. A much better approach is to tackle this properly with a 'Fear of Flying course' run by the airlines such as British Airways and Easyjet.