

Ealing Park

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Health Centre

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FEAR OF FLYING PROTOCOL

We have recently reviewed our benzodiazepine prescribing policies and have decided that the prescribing of benzodiazepines or sedatives (such as diazepam) to help with fear of flying is no longer appropriate.

This policy has been collectively established by the GP Partners and is strictly adhered to by all prescribers within the practice. The underlying reasons for this decision are listed below:

- 1. Prescribing Guidelines:** The British National Formulary (BNF) guidelines, followed by doctors, explicitly contraindicate the use of benzodiazepines in treating phobias. Prescribing against these guidelines places your doctor at significant legal risk. They are only licensed short term for a crisis in generalised anxiety. In such cases, seeking appropriate mental health care and support is advised over embarking on a flight.
- 2. Safety Concerns:** Diazepam, being a sedative, induces drowsiness and relaxation. In the event of an in-flight emergency, its effects might impair your concentration, ability to follow instructions, and react promptly. This compromise in responsiveness could have severe safety implications not just for you, but also for your fellow passengers.
- 3. Non-REM Sleep:** Sedative medications may lead to sleep, but the sleep is characterized by an unnatural absence of rapid eye movement (non-REM). Consequently, you are not moving around as much as you would during natural sleep, increasing the risk of developing blood clots, including Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) in the leg or lungs. DVT is a lifethreatening condition with potential fatal outcomes, especially during flights exceeding four hours.
- 4. Adverse Reactions:** While most individuals find benzodiazepines such as diazepam sedating, a minority might feel agitated or even act strangely. These drugs can also lead to disinhibition, causing you to behave in a way that you would not normally. Such behaviour could compromise your safety and that of fellow passengers, possibly resulting in legal consequences.
- 5. Legal Implications Abroad:** Diazepam and similar medications are prohibited in multiple countries. Possession could lead to confiscation or legal issues.

6. **Drug Testing Impact:** Diazepam remains detectable in your system for a considerable duration. If your occupation mandates random drug testing, using diazepam could lead to test failures.

We understand the genuine and distressing nature of fear of flying. A more effective approach involves engaging in comprehensive Fear of Flying courses offered by airlines. We have listed some notable options below:

- **EasyJet Fearless Flyer Course:** Website: www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com | Tel: 0203 8131644
- **British Airways Flying with Confidence:** Website: www.flyingwithconfidence.com | Tel: 01252 793250
- **Virgin Flying Without Fear:** Website: www.flyingwithoutfear.co.uk | Tel: 01423 714900

Addressing fear of flying through these reputable courses provides a more comprehensive and informed solution.

Kind Regards,

Ealing Park Health Centre