

Sedative Prescribing for Travel POLICY

Policy Statement

Edlesborough Surgery do **NOT** prescribe sedatives for travel (e.g. Flying, etc.).

Policy Rationale / Guidance

Patients often ask if we can prescribe sedatives (e.g. diazepam, etc.) prior to travelling.

There are several very good reasons why prescribing sedatives is not recommended.

1. Sedatives 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.
2. Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when you do sleep it is an unnatural non-REM (non-Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. This means you won't move around as much as during natural sleep. This can cause you to be at increased risk of developing a blood clot (DVT - deep vein thrombosis) in the leg or even the lung. Blood clots are very dangerous and can even prove fatal. This risk is greater if your flight is **more** than 4 hours.
3. Whilst most people find benzodiazepines like diazepam sedating, a small number have paradoxical agitation and increased 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.
4. In accordance with the doctors prescribing guidelines (British National Formulary (BNF)) Benzodiazepines are contraindicated (not allowed) in treating phobia. Your doctor would be taking a significant legal risk by prescribing against these guidelines. 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.
5. Sedatives (e.g. Diazepam, etc.) are illegal in several countries. They may be confiscated, or other consequences may result.
6. Sedatives (e.g. Diazepam, etc.) stay in your system for a long duration. If your job requires you to submit to random drug testing you may fail these tests.

We appreciate that fear of travel is very real and very frightening. A much better approach is to tackle this properly with a 'fear of travel' (e.g. 'fear of flying, etc.') course provided by one of the travel companies – see: References

References

This is not an exhaustive list

- Fear of Flying – British Airways <https://flyingwithconfidence.com/>
- Fear of Flying – Virgin Atlantic <https://flywith.virginatlantic.com/gh/en/wellbeing-and-health/flying-without-fear.html>
- Fear of Flying – easyJet <https://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com/?>

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Table of Contents

Sedative Prescribing for Travel POLICY	1
Policy Statement	1
Policy Rationale / Guidance	1
Patients often ask if we can prescribe sedatives (e.g. diazepam, etc.) prior to travelling.	1
There are several very good reasons why prescribing sedatives is not recommended.....	1
References	1
Revision Record V1 2024-12 Next Review 2029-12.....	1