

Benzodiazepines for Fear of Flying, Medical Procedures, and other Phobic Disorders

After careful consideration, Mattishall Surgery has decided to no longer prescribe diazepam for patients for fear of flying, fear of having investigations including MRI/CT scans or other phobic disorders. We have a duty of care to provide safe, consistent, and appropriate care for our patients.

Diazepam in the UK is a Class C/Schedule IV controlled drug. The following short guide outlines the issues surrounding its use with regards to flying, medical procedures and other phobic disorders and why the surgery no longer prescribes such medications for these purposes.

1. According to the prescribing guidelines doctors follow (British National Formulary) diazepam is contraindicated (not allowed) in treating phobic states. It also states that “the use of benzodiazepines (e.g., Diazepam) to treat short-term ‘mild’ anxiety is inappropriate. Any doctor would be taking a significant legal risk by prescribing against these guidelines.
2. Diazepam is a sedative, and it would impair your ability to concentrate. It may make you sleepy during flight increasing the risk of any injury particularly in emergency situations. This could seriously affect the safety of you and the people around you.
3. Although most people respond to benzodiazepines like Diazepam with sedation, a small proportion experiences 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. Although plane emergencies are a rare occurrence there are concerns about reduced awareness and reaction times for patients taking Diazepam which could pose a significant risk of not being able to react in a manner which could save their life in the event of an emergency on board necessitating evacuation.
5. It is the responsibility of the hospital consultants/doctor requesting the imaging to prescribe medication if they deem necessary. They can do this through the hospital pharmacy or organising a prescription themselves.
6. Sedated patients should be monitored regularly for any adverse effects of the medication.
7. The Royal College of Radiologists' own guidelines on sedation for imaging makes no mention of GP involvement or provision of low dose anxiolytics and stresses the importance of experienced well-trained staff involved and the monitoring of sedated patients.

Given the above, we will no longer be prescribing Diazepam or similar drugs for fear of flying, medical procedures, and other phobic disorders.

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>

Tel: 01252 793 250

Virgin Atlantic

<https://flyingwithoutfear.com>

Tel: 01423 714900 1252250

For further information:

- [British National Formulary – Diazepam](#)
- [British National Formulary – Hypnotics and anxiolytics](#)
- [Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults: management. NICE Clinical guideline](#)
- [Travel Health Pro; Medicines and Travel; Carrying medication abroad and advice regarding falsified medication](#)