

Diazepam and fear of flying policy

Red Practice Crieff does not prescribe sedative medication such as diazepam for fear of flying.

Red Practice Crieff, has taken the decision to no longer prescribe benzodiazepines, like diazepam, for fear of flying. We understand this may be difficult, particularly for those who have in the past received prescriptions from us, but we have set out some of the reasons behind this decision below. This is based on both prescribing and national guidance.

1. Benzodiazepines are sedative drugs; part of the way they work is by making you feel sleepier and more relaxed. Whilst flying there are concerns this could affect behaviour and response times in an emergency, potentially putting yourself, fellow passengers, and crew members at increased risk if they needed to help you instead of dealing with the situation.
2. Benzodiazepines may increase your risk of deep vein thrombosis, blood clots in the legs and lungs. They affect sleep quality, leading to more non-REM sleep, meaning your body moves less than during natural sleep. This risk is more likely on flights longer than four hours. Clots like this can make people extremely ill and can at times be fatal.
3. Although for most people benzodiazepines cause sedation, they can occasionally cause people to become more agitated and behave in unusual ways. This may lead to problems whilst in airports and on flights.
4. Respiratory changes. Oxygen levels even for normal healthy people reduce when up in the air. Benzodiazepines can affect your breathing causing you to breathe less well which might be particularly problematic if you have underlying heart or breathing difficulties already.
5. These effects can all be enhanced when taking alcohol which is common on flights and could add to the concerns already discussed above.
6. According to the national prescribing guidelines that doctors follow (the British National Formulary, or BNF) benzodiazepines are not allowed to be prescribed in cases of phobia. Thus your doctor would be taking a significant legal risk by prescribing diazepam for fear of flying as it is going against these guidelines. Benzodiazepines 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.

7. Benzodiazepines are illegal in some countries and so you could find yourselves in trouble with the authorities in these places.

8. Driving. Benzodiazepines can take a variable amount of time to get out of your system. Sedative effects can potentially impair driving and increase risk of accidents particularly in people who are new to taking the medication. It may be hard to know when you are safe to drive again particularly as above if combined with alcohol. Different countries have different laws regarding driving with drugs, but you can be tested for this at the roadside.

We appreciate that fear of flying is a genuine and distressing condition which can cause considerable distress. Many airlines offer fit to fly courses which can help with managing this and we would encourage you to look at some of the links below:

Fear of flying course

<https://thefearofflying.com/programs/fly-and-be-calm/>

Fearless Flyer (easyjet.com)

<https://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com/>

British Airways™ Fear of flying courses

<https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/travel-assistance/flying-with-confidence>

Flying without fear

<https://www.flyingwithoutfear.com/>

There are also some over the counter medications that can be purchased which some people may find useful.

Kind regards

Red Practice Team