

Also called benzos, rowies, vals, V, downers, sleepers, Mother's little helpers.

Benzodiazepines are depressant drugs which means that they slow down and interfere with the functioning of the brain and the body. Benzodiazepines are prescription medicines known as minor tranquillisers. They may be prescribed to help people with stress, anxiety or sleep problems; they are intended only for short-term use, maximum 3-4 weeks. Benzodiazepines may be more widely known by their brand or trade name.

Generic Name	Trade Name
Diazepam	Valium [®] , Ducene [®] , Antenex [®] , Valpam [®]
Oxazepam	Serepax [®] , Murelax [®] , Alepam [®]
Nitrazepam	Mogadon [®] , Alodorm [®]
Temazepam	Normison [®] , Temaze [®] , Temtabs [®]
Lorazepam	Ativan [®]
Flunitrazepam	Rohypnol [®] , Hypnodorm [®]
Bromazepam	Lexotan [®]
Clonazepam	Rivotril [®] , Paxam [®]
Alprazolam	Kalma [®] , Alprax [®] , Ralozam [®] , Xanax [®]

What do they look like?

- Tablets
- Capsules
- Oral liquids

How are they used?

- Usually swallowed

People who inject benzodiazepines, which are intended to be swallowed, are at risk of additional harms including injection related injuries and blood-borne viruses. There is also an increased likelihood of overdose due to the more rapid onset of effect.

What are the possible short-term effects?

People commonly use benzodiazepines to relieve stress, anxiety and to help them sleep. Some people take benzodiazepines to induce a feeling of euphoria or to feel relaxed, or to help withdrawal from other substances. Other short-term effects include:

- Tiredness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Blackouts
- Short-term memory loss
- Temporary inability to form new memories
- Blurred vision
- Mood swings
- Impaired learning.

People who inject are at higher risk of additional harms such as:

- Blood-borne viruses
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Damage to circulatory system
- Increased likelihood of overdose.

Benzodiazepines affect people differently, depending on a range of factors including what dose is taken, whether it is used with other drugs, and the individual characteristics of the person.

What are the possible long-term effects?

- Nausea
- Headaches
- Weight gain
- Low energy
- Lack of motivation
- Poor sleep
- Irritability
- Paranoia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Memory Loss
- Cognitive impairment

What are the signs of a benzodiazepine problem?

- Spending a great deal of time getting, using, or recovering from the effects
- Using in greater amounts, or for longer than originally planned
- Needing to use more to get the same effect
- Having cravings, difficulties stopping/reducing use
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms
- Social problems including relationship issues, financial problems, impacts on study or work and legal problems

Thinking about cutting back or stopping?

For people using benzodiazepines regularly, it is advised to seek medical advice before stopping as they may be dependent. Benzodiazepine withdrawal can trigger seizures. Withdrawal symptoms may be unpleasant, but will lessen over time. Common withdrawal symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, aching muscles, poor sleep, low mood, irritability, hallucinations, paranoia, anxiety and cravings.

Sometimes it can take a few attempts to cut back or stop.

- Focus on reasons for cutting down or stopping
- Avoid 'triggers' (i.e. things associated with using such as places, people and stressful situations)
- Ask a friend, family member or health professional for support

Benzodiazepine use and pregnancy

Regular benzodiazepine use throughout pregnancy can cause the baby once born, to experience withdrawal symptoms such as drowsiness, respiratory difficulties and low muscle tone. People who are concerned about their benzodiazepine use while pregnant or breastfeeding should talk to their doctor or health professional.

Benzodiazepines when taken in large doses or when mixed with alcohol or other drugs increase the risk of an overdose.

What help is available?

Adis 24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support is a 24 hour, 7 day a week confidential support service for people in Queensland with alcohol and other drug concerns, their loved ones and health professionals.

Talk to us. Anytime, anywhere.
1800 177 833

What should I do in an emergency?

Signs of a benzodiazepine overdose may include:

- Slow and shallow breathing
- Agitation
- Drowsiness
- Loss of consciousness

If the person has collapsed or lost consciousness, call an ambulance on **triple zero (000)**. If they have stopped breathing commence CPR. If they are breathing normally, place them into the recovery position and continue to monitor them.

