

**Protocol for:
Non-Prescribing of Diazepam for Flight Anxiety
Written by: The Management Team**

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Review date: Alternative Years**

Purpose

This policy sets out the practice's position on prescribing diazepam or other benzodiazepines for flight anxiety. It reflects national clinical guidance, patient safety considerations, and NHS contractual obligations.

Policy Statement

The practice does not prescribe diazepam or any benzodiazepine for the purpose of flying or managing flight-related anxiety. This applies to all patients, including those who have previously received such medication elsewhere.

This decision is based on established clinical guidance, safety risks, and the limitations of NHS primary care prescribing.

Clinical Rationale

3.1 National Guidance

- The British National Formulary (BNF) and NICE advise that benzodiazepines should not be used for:
- Phobic states (e.g., fear of flying)
- Mild or short-term situational anxiety
- Benzodiazepines are licensed only for short-term use in acute, severe generalised anxiety, not specific phobias.
- Prescribing diazepam for flight anxiety would therefore be outside national guidance and may expose clinicians to medico-legal risk.

Safety During Air Travel

Diazepam is a sedative that can impair:

- Awareness
- Coordination
- Reaction time

In the event of an in-flight emergency, sedation may reduce a passenger's ability to respond quickly, potentially endangering themselves and others.

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Some individuals experience paradoxical reactions, including:

- Agitation
- Aggression
- Disinhibition

These reactions can be unpredictable and may create safety issues during a flight.

Risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Sedation can lead to unnaturally deep sleep and prolonged immobility.

On flights—particularly those over four hours—this increases the risk of DVT, a potentially serious medical condition.

Dependence and Misuse

Benzodiazepines are controlled drugs (Class C) and carry risks of:

- Dependence
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Cognitive impairment with repeated use

Prescribing them for occasional, non-medical situations such as flying is discouraged due to these risks.

NHS Contractual Position

Under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, GPs are not required to prescribe medication for flight anxiety.

Fear of flying is considered a specific phobia, not a medical condition requiring NHS treatment.

Legal and Travel Considerations

Diazepam:

- Is illegal or restricted in several countries
- May affect travel insurance if not declared
- Could lead to legal issues when crossing borders

Patients are responsible for ensuring they comply with the laws of the countries they travel through.

Recommended Alternatives

Patients will be directed to non-pharmacological, evidence-based options, such as:

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

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- Airline-run fear-of-flying courses
- Relaxation, breathing, and anxiety-management techniques

These approaches are safer, more effective, and address the underlying phobia.

Scope

This policy applies to all prescribers within the practice, including GPs, GP registrars, and non-medical prescribers.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if national guidance changes.