



Position statement on the prescription of sedatives for fear of flying

November 2024

To whom it may concern,

New Forest PCN practices have taken the decision to no longer prescribe sedatives for fear of flying.

The reasons for this can be found below:

1. Benzodiazepines (like diazepam) are sedatives, which means they make you sleepy and more relaxed. If there is an in-flight emergency they impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions and react to the situation. This could have serious safety consequences for you and your fellow passengers and crew.
2. Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when you do sleep it is an unnatural non-REM sleep. This means you won't move around as much as during natural sleep. You can then be at increased risk of developing a blood clot (DVT) in the leg or even the lung. Blood clots are very dangerous and can even prove fatal. This risk is even greater if your flight is greater than four hours.
3. While most medications like these are sedative, sometimes they can cause agitation and in 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 police.
4. According to the prescribing guidelines doctors follow Benzodiazepines are not licensed for use in phobia. Your doctor is taking a significant legal risk by prescribing against these guidelines. If this is the case, you should be getting proper care and support for your mental health and not for going on a flight.
5. Diazepam and similar drugs are illegal in many countries. They may be confiscated or you may find yourself in trouble with the police.
6. Diazepam stays in your system for quite a while. If your job requires you to submit to random drug testing you may fail this having taken diazepam.

We appreciate that fear of flying is very real and very frightening. A much better approach is to tackle this properly with a Fear of Flying course run by the airlines and we have listed a number of these below (other courses are also available).

Easy Jet

www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com

Tel [0203 8131644](tel:02038131644)

British Airways

www.flyingwithconfidence.com

Tel [01252 793250](tel:01252793250)

Virgin

www.flyingwithoutfear.co.uk

Tel [01423 714900](tel:01423714900)

Yours sincerely



Dr Neil Moody-Jones

Clinical Director – New Forest PCN

GP Partner – Wistaria and Milford Surgeries

newforest.pcn@nhs.net

New Forest PCN is made up of the following surgeries representing over 33 thousand patients:

- Wistaria and Milford Surgeries
- Chawton House Surgery
- New Forest Medical Group
- Lyndhurst Surgery