

# Benzodiazepines (e.g. Diazepam, Lorazepam, Temazepam)

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Why have I received this letter?

You have received this letter as our records suggest you are taking a benzodiazepine. These medicines include diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam, nitrazepam, and clonazepam. They may be prescribed for anxiety, insomnia, muscle spasm, or seizures.

What do I need to know?

- Benzodiazepines are designed for short-term use (usually no more than 2–4 weeks).
- Long-term use carries risks:
  - Tolerance: over time the effect wears off, leading to higher doses being needed.
  - Dependence: stopping suddenly can cause severe withdrawal (anxiety, tremors, seizures).
  - Cognitive effects: memory and concentration problems.
  - Falls: increased risk of falls, especially in older people. Sadly, some falls related to benzodiazepines have led to serious injury or even death.
  - Mental health: can worsen depression and anxiety in the long term.
  - Breathing problems and overdose risk: when taken in high doses, or combined with opioids or alcohol, benzodiazepines can slow breathing and increase the risk of accidental overdose and death.
  - Driving and safety: increased accident risk; subject to UK drug-driving law.

Should I stop my medication?

- Do not stop suddenly – this can be dangerous.
- If you wish to consider reducing your dose, please book a routine appointment with your GP or pharmacist. A gradual taper is usually required.

Where can I find more information?

- NHS: Diazepam: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/diazepam/> | Temazepam: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/temazepam/>
- Patient info: Benzodiazepines: <https://patient.info/mental-health/insomnia-poor-sleep/benzodiazepines>
- NICE: Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg113>