

SEDATIVES

You May Be at Risk For a Fall

If you are taking benzodiazepines or other sedative medication for anxiety or to help you sleep:

BENZODIAZEPINES

Alprazolam

- Xanax
- Xanax XR

Chlordiazepoxide

Clonazepam

- Klonopin

Clorazepate

Diazepam

- Valium

Estazolam

Flurazepam

Lorazepam

- Ativan
- Loreev XR
- Lorazepam Intensol

Midazolam

Oxazepam

Quazepam

- Doral

Temazepam

- Restoril

Triazolam

- Halcion

OTHER SEDATIVES

Eszopiclone

- Lunesta

Zaleplon

- Sonata

Zolpidem

- Ambien
- Ambien CR
- Edluar



Test Your Knowledge About Sedating Medications

1. This medication does not have side effects if taken for a long time.
2. Low doses of this medication can cause side effects.
3. Stopping this medication can cause symptoms to return or get worse.
4. This medication is the best option to treat anxiety or sleep problems.

TRUE

FALSE

Did you know?

These medications are used to treat a variety of conditions including anxiety, seizure disorders, muscle spasms, pain and sleep problems. If you are taking one of these medications for any mental illness, please consult your mental health or primary care provider about whether it is appropriate to stop or change your current medication.

Answers

1 FALSE: This medication does not have side effects if taken for a long time.

Older adults can experience side effects even if they have been using the medication for a long time. It is not recommended to take this medication for long-term use to treat insomnia or anxiety in older people. Talk with your doctor about how long you should take this medication.

2 TRUE: Low doses of this medication can cause side effects.

Even if you take a small dose, this medication may have side effects. It may reduce your mental ability and slow your reflexes, which can lead to injury such as a fracture. Some other side effects include:

- Memory and concentration problems
- Daytime sleepiness or fatigue
- Increased risk of falls and injuries
- Increased risk of motor vehicle crashes

3 TRUE: Stopping this medication can cause symptoms to return or get worse.

You may have trouble sleeping and feel more anxiety if you suddenly stop taking this medication. However, many people have slowly reduced this medication and found other ways to manage their symptoms.

4 FALSE: This medication is the best option to treat anxiety or sleep problems.

This medication may relieve your symptoms of anxiety or insomnia for a short time. However, it does not resolve the underlying problem. This medication may cause side effects that increase your risk of falls and injuries. Alternate treatments are available.



Want to learn more?

We've enclosed some information on how to develop healthier sleep habits and lessen stress and anxiety. This information can help you choose a safer alternative.

Did you know?

- ▶ Benzodiazepines or other sedative-hypnotic medications can lead to physical dependency. This means you need to slowly reduce the dose to avoid withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety or sleep disturbances.
- ▶ For benzodiazepines, it is important that you work with your doctor to reduce your dosage slowly. This helps to avoid serious adverse effects, including seizures, delirium, and death. As you age, these medications remain in your body for longer periods of time. This happens because our liver and kidneys take more time to remove medications. This means a dose that was once safe may start causing side effects.
- ▶ Sedatives can impair balance, increase falls and fractures, and cause memory problems. They may cause sleepwalking and daytime drowsiness, which could result in a car accident.
- ▶ There are alternative treatments to help relieve your anxiety and improve sleep that do not contribute to fall risk.

Even if you are NOT experiencing side effects, talk with your doctor or pharmacist about safer treatment options.



So ask yourself

	YES	NO
• Are you often tired or sleepy during the day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you ever feel hungover in the morning, even though you have not been drinking? Hangover symptoms include headache, nausea, dizziness, or sensitivity to light.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you ever have problems with your memory or your balance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, talk to your doctor or pharmacist to see if this medicine is causing your symptoms.

Consult your doctor

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about alternative treatments with a lower risk of falls and injuries and that may be more effective.



Alternatives for Benzodiazepines or Other Sedative-Hypnotic Medications

If you are taking one for sleep:

There are strategies you can try at home to help with insomnia. Insomnia is when you have trouble falling or staying asleep.

- Do not read or watch TV in bed. Watching TV or reading in bed might make it harder for you to fall asleep.
- Go to bed at the same time every night even on the weekends.
- Avoid caffeine, chocolate, and nicotine at least 5 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol or heavy meals close to bedtime.
- Keep your room quiet, relaxing, and at a cool temperature when sleeping.
- Stop using electronics at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about using a sleep diary, which can help you understand disruptive sleep patterns.
- Discuss alternative treatments with your doctor or pharmacist.

If you are taking one for anxiety:

There are other solutions to deal with your stress and anxiety:

- Take a break. Even a five-minute break to take care of yourself can make a difference. Practice deep breathing and relaxation.
- Take a walk, stretch, or another physical activity to keep you active.
- Get help from a professional such as a counselor or therapist to work through stressful situations and identify the sources of your anxiety.
- Relaxation techniques like stretching, yoga, massage, meditation, or Tai Chi can help relieve stress and aid you in working through anxiety.

Mrs. Robinson's Story

Mrs. Robinson has been taking lorazepam, a drug like the one you're taking.

"I am 65 years old and took lorazepam for 20 years. A few months ago, I fell in the middle of the night on my way to the bathroom and had to go to the hospital. I was lucky that except for some bruises, I did not hurt myself. I read that lorazepam puts me at risk for falls. I did not know if I could live without lorazepam because I always have trouble falling asleep and sometimes wake up in the middle of the night.

I talked to my primary care doctor, who told me that sleep changes with aging. That's when I decided to stop taking lorazepam. My doctor recommended gradually reducing the dose. I had problems sleeping as I was reducing my dose but I stuck with the plan and I started sleeping better.

I also changed some of my sleeping habits after talking about all this with my doctor. I stopped watching TV and reading in bed. The other change I made was to set an alarm to get out of bed every morning at the same time—even if I hadn't had a good night's sleep.

By taking these steps, I was able to stop using lorazepam. Stopping lorazepam has lifted a veil, like I had been semi-sleeping through my life. I have more energy and feel more alert. I don't always sleep well at night, but I don't feel as groggy in the morning."

Tapering-off program

Following a schedule directed by your doctor or pharmacist to slowly lower your sedative medication dose, also called tapering, can help reduce the risk of withdrawal symptoms.

Tapering schedules often take longer than five weeks and you may need to use multiple copies of this page for a full taper.

Ask your doctor to complete the chart below for your own tapering schedule:

TAPER SCHEDULE								
Week	Time of day	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							

Please consult your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist before stopping any medication.

