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BENZODIAZEPINES - FOR FEAR OF FLYING

This leaflet explains why Garthdee Medical Group would advise against taking benzodiazepines (such as diazepam) for **fear of flying**. Many other GP practices have a similar policy.

They are sedating drugs which can cause **safety** concerns;

- If you are drowsy, your reaction times may be slower and you may be **unable to act quickly** in an emergency on-board a flight
- If you are drowsy you may move around less and sit for longer, increasing **the risk of a DVT** (blood clot) in the leg or even lung. This can have **serious** (even fatal) outcomes

They can cause **respiratory depression** (slower breathing rate) which can be dangerous as blood oxygen levels are already reduced at high altitude.

It is possible that they can cause agitation and confusion which may put other passengers at risk.

They are a controlled (regulated) drug in the UK and we must prescribe medications **safely**:

- The use of benzodiazepines to treat phobia (fear) is contraindicated (i.e. not allowed) – this is the advice given in the BNF (drug formulary) which is the manual used for information about drugs.
- They are only indicated for severe or disabling anxiety – we would not advocate flying if a patient was suffering from this.

Benzodiazepines are illegal in some countries meaning you may risk breaking the law if you take these medications with you.

They should not be mixed with alcohol which may be available to buy on or before a flight.

We appreciate patients may have a genuine fear of flying. Several of the big UK-based airlines provide 'Fear of Flying' courses which you may wish to investigate.

Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Garthdee Medical Group