



Birtley Medical Group

Prescribing of Sedation for Fear of Flying

April 2019

Due to a medical safety alert update received from an aviation trained doctor, we at Birtley Medical Group have been advised that we should no longer prescribe sedating drugs called benzodiazepines (diazepam/lorazepam/temazepam or midazolam) for the use of treating fear of flying.

We have taken the decision to put our patients' safety first and to follow this safety guidance and will no longer provide prescriptions for benzodiazepines for these reasons.

- 1) The use of benzodiazepines cause longer reaction times & slowed thinking, which during a flight will put the passenger at significant risk of not being able to act in a manner which could save their life in the event of a safety critical scenario.
- 2) The use of benzodiazepines has the potential to increase the risk of DVT (deep vein thrombosis).
- 3) The sedating effects can reduce respiratory function which has the potential to be life threatening – even more so if there is a combination with alcohol.
- 4) There is the possibility of increased aggression may be reported by patients taking benzodiazepines and therefore has potential to put other occupants of the aircraft at risk.
- 5) Benzodiazepines are not recommended for those people with phobic states.
- 6) For some countries it is illegal to import these drugs and so the passenger will need to use a different strategy for the homeward bound journey and /or any subsequent legs of the journey.

We recommend patients who have fear of flying to research going on fear of flying courses. These are run by several major airlines and sometimes by local airports. We are unfortunately unable to recommend any specific courses.