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Benzodiazepines and You

University of Maine Center on Aging

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Benzodiazepines and You



What are Benzodiazepines?

Benzodiazepines are a group of commonly prescribed drugs that are often used to manage anxiety, sleep problems, symptoms of alcohol withdrawal or as a muscle relaxant. Older adults tend to be prescribed these drugs more often than other groups of people and these drugs are often inappropriately prescribed for longer periods of time or at a higher amount than necessary.

Why should I be concerned about these drugs?

Long term use of these drugs also increase the risk of experiencing negative side effects such as:

- Addiction
- Misuse including taking more or less of a drug than originally prescribed
- Memory loss
- Increased risk of dementia with a history of benzodiazepine use
- Increased risk of motor vehicle accidents due to drug effects
- Greater risk of falls which can lead to hip fractures and other injuries

If you are currently taking a benzodiazepine drug and are experiencing any of these side effects contact your health care provider.

Steps you can take to protect your health :

- Ask your doctor about the risks of taking benzodiazepine drugs.
- Ask about alternatives to using benzodiazepine drugs.
- If you are taking this prescription for a long period of time find out if there is a safer way to manage your symptoms.
- Inform your health care provider of any negative side effects you are experiencing.




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