

Sedative Prescribing for Fear of Flying (and others) Policy

Priory Medical Group does NOT prescribe diazepam outside of its terms of license. This includes as a sedative for aircraft flights, MRI scans and dental procedures, and to calm nerves for public speaking.

This policy decision has been made by the GP partners and is adhered to by all prescribers working across all sites.

The reasons for this are listed below:

1. Diazepam is a sedative, which means it makes you more sleepy and more relaxed. If there is an emergency during a flight or procedure, this may impair your ability to concentrate, follow vital instructions and react to the situation. This could have serious safety consequences for you and those around you.
2. Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when you do sleep it is an unnatural form of sleep called non-REM sleep. This means your body does not move around as much as during natural sleep and can increase your risk of developing a blood clot in the leg (DVT) or lung (pulmonary embolism). Blood clots are dangerous, and in some circumstances can be fatal. This risk is even higher for those on flights over 4 hours.
3. While most people find diazepam sedating, a small number of people have a differing reaction and can become agitated and aggressive. Diazepam can also cause disinhibition, leading you to behave in a way that you would not normally. These effects can impact on your safety and in some instances can get you in trouble with the law.
4. According to prescribing guidelines for doctors (BNF) benzodiazepines (including diazepam) are contraindicated (not allowed) in patients with phobia. Your doctor would have to take a significant legal risk to prescribe against these guidelines, and risk losing their job. They are only licensed short term for a crisis in generalised anxiety. If this is the case, you should be getting proper support and care for your mental health.
5. Diazepam, and other sedating drugs are illegal in several countries. They may be confiscated, or worse you may find yourself in trouble with the police.
6. Diazepam stays in your system for quite a while after taking it. If your job requires random drug testing, you may fail this after taking diazepam.

We appreciate that anxiety can be very debilitating, and we urge patients to see us for support with their mental health. We appreciate a fear of flying is very real and very frightening. A better approach to tackle this is to take a fear of flying course run by the airlines listed below.

Flight Company	Website	Contact Details
Virgin Atlantic	https://flyingwithoutfear.co.uk/	info@flyingwithoutfear.co.uk Tel 01423 714900
British Airways	www.flyingwithconfidence.com	https://flyingwithconfidence.com/contact Tel 01252 793 250
EasyJet	https://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com/	info@fearless-flyer.com Tel 0203 813 1644