Dear Patient

Diazepam Prescribing for Fear of Flying

After careful consideration, Lightwater Surgery will no longer prescribe Diazepam or similar sedative drugs for fear of flying.

This policy decision has been made by the GP Partners and will be adhered to by all the prescribing clinicians in the team.

The reasons for this are listed here:

1. Diazepam is a sedative, which means it makes you sleepy and more relaxed. If there was an emergency during a flight, 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 may make you sleep very deeply on a flight. This means your body does not move around as much as during natural lighter sleep and can increase your risk of developing a blood clot in the leg (DVT) or the lung (pulmonary embolism). Blood clots are dangerous, and in some circumstances can be fatal. The risk is even higher on flights lasting over 4 hours and flying is often associated with becoming dehydrated, which further increases your risk.
3. During a flight, there is less oxygen in the environment inside the plane than we are used to in everyday life. For individuals with heart or lung problems, a sedative may make them breathe more slowly or less effectively, which can increase the risk of dangerous health problems during the flight.
4. While most people find diazepam and similar drugs sedating, a small number of people have a different reaction and can become agitated and aggressive. Diazepam can also cause disinhibition, leading you to behave in ways you would not normally. These effects can impact your safety and, in some cases, get you in trouble with the law as airlines increasingly clamp down on antisocial behaviour.
5. According to prescribing guidance for doctors (The British National Formulary), Diazepam and related drugs are contraindicated (not advised) in patients with phobias. As medical professionals we are expected to follow such guidance and not doing so risks our medical license should an adverse event occur.
6. Diazepam and related drugs are illegal in some countries. This could lead to such medication being confiscated or worse, have legal consequences, in a foreign country.
7. Diazepam can stay in your system for quite a while after taking it. This may lead an individual to fail an occupational drugs test in the future.

We do appreciate that anxiety can be very debilitating, and that fear of flying is very real and frightening. We also appreciate that you may have been prescribed diazepam in the past for this reason and that our decision to stop prescribing may come as an unwelcome surprise. A better approach to tackle this however is to take a fear of flying course run by the airlines listed below (Other providers may offer similar)

Easy Jet [www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com](http://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com)

British Airways [www.flyingwithconfidence.com](http://www.flyingwithconfidence.com)

There may be private medical services who offer to prescribe for fear of flying such as private GP services, but for the reasons listed above, we do not recommend this.

We hope that the above information is clear. Our decision-making is based on safety considerations and our commitment to providing our patients with safe and evidence-based care. If you request medication for flying, our receptionists and/or GPs will decline this.

Should you need any additional support for anxiety or other mental health concerns, do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

The GP Partners

Lightwater Surgery