



Fear of Flying Policy

Riverside Highland Medical Group has made a decision not to prescribe sedative medication, such as diazepam, for fear of flying.

This is in line with current guidance from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), and is now the approach taken by many other GP Practices, given the significant risks associated with these medications;

- Sedative medications like diazepam make you sleepy and more relaxed. If there is an emergency during the flight they may impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions and react to the situation. This could have serious safety consequences for you and those around you.
- Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when you do sleep it is an unnatural non-REM sleep. This means you don't move around as much as during natural sleep. This can cause you to be at increased risk of developing a blood clot in the leg (deep vein thrombosis – DVT) or the lung (pulmonary embolism – PE). Blood clots are dangerous and can even prove fatal. This risk is even higher if your flight is longer than four hours.
- Whilst most people find medications like diazepam sedating, a small number have paradoxical agitation and aggression. They can cause disinhibition and lead you to behave in a way that you would not normally. This could impact on your safety as well as that of other passengers, and could also get you into trouble with the law.
- Sedative medication can cause some respiratory depression, resulting in a drop in oxygen levels. This is more significant whilst flying, when oxygen levels are already lower than usual.
- According to the prescribing guidelines doctors follow (British National Formulary) benzodiazepines such as diazepam are contraindicated (not allowed) in phobias. Your doctor is taking a significant risk by prescribing against these guidelines. They are only licensed short term for a crisis in generalised anxiety. If this is the case, you should be getting proper care and support for your mental health and not going on a flight.
- Drugs like diazepam and other sedatives are illegal in a number of countries. They may be confiscated or you may find yourself in trouble with the police.
- Diazepam and similar medications can stay in your system for quite a while. If your job requires you to submit to random drug testing you may fail this having taken such medication.

We appreciate that fear of flying is very real and can be very frightening, information on strategies to deal with this fear can be found at;

<https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-manage-flight-anxiety>

Fear of Flying courses are also a good option, often run by airlines such as these listed below:

Easy Jet www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com

British Airways www.flyingwithconfidence.com