

Advice for relatives

If your relative is withdrawing from these tablets, you may be able to help by:

- Trying not to worry too much and give them lots of encouragement
- Keeping your relative warm can reduce tension and withdrawal effects
- Making sure he or she eats and drinks regularly
- Helping him or her to avoid catnaps during the day
- Gentle exercise e.g. going for a walk together
- Encouraging them to spend time with others
- Helping them while they adjust

"I've just thought of another reason why I think you should come off the nerve/sleeping tablets"

Helping Organisations



Council for Involuntary Tranquilliser Addiction

Cavendish House
Brighton Road
Waterloo
Liverpool L22 5NG
0151 949 0102

Life Line

Oldham Street
Manchester
0161 839 2054

National Phobics Society

0870 7700 456

*Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust,
and North, South & Central Manchester PCT's
(adapted from work by Salford PCT)*

What You Should Know About Tranquillisers

("Nerve" or Sleeping Tablets)

Why do people take tranquillisers?

Sometimes in everybody's life, they have a 'difficult time'. It could be because of a stressful event in their lives or a build up of difficulties. When this happens doctors sometimes suggest you take something to calm you down. There are a variety of pills they may suggest, one kind are sometimes called tranquillisers.

What is a tranquilliser?

These tablets are also called benzodiazepines. You may have thought of them as nerve or sleeping tablets. Common examples include Mogadon (nitrazepam), Normison (temazepam), Valium (diazepam), Ativan (lorazepam).

How do they help me?

The good thing is that they help you feel calm and less stressed. They make it easier to cope with anxiety.

BUT

They only help for a short while to give you a space to 'sort yourself out'. It is now known that they should only be given for a short time.

How long should I take these tablets?

Unfortunately, your body gets used to taking them so they no longer work as well. If you have taken them for longer than a month or so, you should discuss this with your doctor.

Does long term use cause problems?

If you continue to take these tablets for a long period of time, they can have unpleasant effects on:

- Your concentration
- Your memory
- Your attention
- Your ability to think clearly

These can all have effects on you daily life including:

- Falls
- Driving
- Dealing with money
- Shopping
- Keeping up hobbies
- Doing household chores
- Watching TV
- Reading

How can I stop taking them?

First, check if you are taking any of these tablets. If you are not sure – ask. If you have taken these tablets for a long time, then you must discuss with your doctor how to stop taking them.

This is important to avoid withdrawal or side effects although six out of ten people say they experience no side effects when withdrawing. However, stopping tablets may cause some side effects for a while.

These may include:

- Sweating
- Feeling shaky, (either inside or actually shaking)
- Panic attacks
- Disturbed sleep
- Nightmares
- Light seems very bright
- Noises seem very loud
- Pins and needles and 'funny sensations'
- Lack of concentration

What can I do to lessen these side effects?

You should agree with your doctor how to come off your tablets safely. You can help yourself by:

- Taking regular exercise such as a short walk
- Learning to relax and sometimes yoga or meditation can help
- Developing a sleep routine by going to bed and getting up at similar times
- Eating regular meals
- Talking over your problems with someone, for example a friend, practice nurse or counsellor

Once your body has learnt to work again without the tablets, all the withdrawal effects will disappear. Time for this varies from person to person. You can ask your doctor how long this is likely to take.