

## FAQ'S

### CAN I DRINK ALCOHOL WHILE TAKING ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS?

Alcohol is safe in moderation. However, excess consumption of alcohol when combined with anti-anxiety medication can be dangerous. Mixing benzodiazepines with alcohol increases the risk of sedation, anterograde amnesia, and breathing difficulty.

### ARE PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS MY ONLY OPTION?

No! There are many non-prescription drug strategies to help relieve anxiety such as deep breathing, coping strategies, avoiding excessive caffeine, getting adequate sleep, etc. This handout is intended on informing those who are considering prescription drug therapy. Punk Talks is more than happy to aid you in choosing non-prescription drug therapy to help treat anxiety.

### WILL MY PRESCRIPTION DRUG INSURANCE COVER THESE MEDICATIONS?

Most insurance companies cover the commonly prescribed anti-anxiety medications. Each insurance company is different, so there may or may not be a copay.

### WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE PRESCRIPTION DRUG INSURANCE?

Many pharmacies will have a generic medication list, meaning you can pay \$4 -5 for a month's supply of medication. Contact your local pharmacy to see what pricing options there are if you do not have insurance. Other options include using prescription drug coupons (these do not work if you already have prescription drug insurance). Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information about drug coupons.



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SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE  
1-800-273-8255

LEARNING ABOUT  
ANTI-ANXIETY MEDS

## ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATION

### ANTIDEPRESSANTS

Antidepressant medications (SSRIs or SNRIs) are often a first line recommendation for treating anxiety disorders. They must be taken every day to be effective. It may take up to 4 weeks to feel the full benefit, but many people feel that their anxiety decreases after 1 week of therapy. They do not provide an immediate anxiety relieving effect.

Side effects depend on which medication is prescribed, but may include:

- Weight or appetite change
- Drowsiness or stimulation
- Thoughts of suicide
- Nausea
- Sexual Dysfunction

### BUSPIRONE (BUSPAR)

Needs to be taken every day to be effective. Like antidepressants, this medication does not have immediate anxiety-relief, but takes 2-4 weeks from starting the drug to help reduce anxiety.

#### Side effects:

- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Headache

### HYDROXYZINE (VISTARIL)

Can be taken as needed and used as an alternative to benzodiazepines because it is not habit forming and is non-addictive

#### Side effects:

- Drowsiness
- Dry mouth
- Constipation

### PROPRANOLOL (INDERAL)

Can be used as needed to reduce symptoms of stage fright or performance anxiety such as tremor and fast heartbeat. Is non-addicting and should not be used if you have asthma or COPD as it may cause shortness of breath in this population of people.

#### Side effects:

- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Decreased blood pressure

### BENZODIAZEPINES

*Alprazolam (Xanax), Clonazepam (Klonopin), Diazepam (Valium), Lorazepam (Ativan)*  
These provide short-term anxiety relief, but should not be used for chronic anxiety management unless indicated by your physician.

#### Side effects:

- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Somnolence
- Anterograde amnesia (after drug is taken some events may not be stored as memories) If any of these side effects persist or worsen, you should contact your healthcare provider promptly.
- Benzodiazepines can cause drug-seeking behavior (addiction/habit forming). Do not increase your dose, take it more frequently, or use it for a longer time than prescribed.

## RISK OF ABUSING BENZODIAZEPINES

- Frequent abuse of benzodiazepines can cause your body to become dependent and possibly addicted to these medications.
- At increased doses, the risk of side effects increases.

- Overdose can cause decreased breathing requiring hospitalization.
- Abusing and mixing benzodiazepines with other medications like opioid pain medications (*hydrocodone, oxycodone, tramadol*), sedatives (*Ambien [zolpidem], promethazine*) or alcohol increases the risk of overdose.
- Do not mix medications without your doctor or pharmacist's knowledge.

## STOPPING BENZODIAZEPINES

If you have been taking benzodiazepines for more than 10 days, you should gradually taper off the medication to avoid withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal of benzodiazepines can cause anxiety, shakiness, insomnia, and a rapid heart beat.

## WHEN STARTING ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS

- Take your first dose at home so you know how the medication will affect your body.
- Do not drive or operate machinery until you know how this medication affects you.
- Keep these medications in a safe place.

**\*\*Punk Talks does not have any conflicts of interest and is not affiliated with any drug manufacturing companies.**