

Benzodiazapines

What are they:

- Benzodiazapines are sedative drugs that are prescribed by doctors to reduce anxiety, to encourage sleep or to act as a muscle relaxant.
- In the **short** term, the drugs can relieve the symptoms of stress and anxiety and promote sleep
- They are sometimes used illicitly (without prescription) to offset the effects of stimulant drugs or with other 'downer' drugs such as alcohol and heroin. Some users inject them.

Effects:

- Tolerance of the drug occurs very soon. After about 2 weeks of continuous use, they may not work as 'sleeping tablets' and after 4 months they may become ineffective in reducing anxiety
- Side effects such as drowsiness, forgetfulness, confusion, depression and digestive problems are very common
- Some users may become over-excited and occasionally violent
- Benzodiazapines are as addictive as other substances. Therefore, users experience
 - tolerance - a need for larger doses to get the same effect; and
 - withdrawal symptoms - these vary from one person to another and may include anxiety, sleeping problems, panic attacks, nausea, fits, and sometimes, hallucinations
- The drugs stay in the body a long time and withdrawal symptoms can last for months, sometimes longer, after stopping the tablets
- Overdose is rarely fatal unless mixed with other downers such as alcohol and heroin

Source: www.drugscope.org.uk