

Dear Patient,

Due to the increasing number of overdose deaths in this country, I have arrived at the decision to stop prescribing benzodiazepines (i.e.-Ativan, Xanax, Klonopin) and the Z drugs (Ambien, Lunesta, Sonata).

Here is why:

- More than 30% of overdose deaths involving opioids also involve benzodiazepines (NIDA).
- Individuals are 10 times more likely to die from an overdose when combining opioids with benzodiazepines (NIDA).
- Drug overdose deaths involving benzodiazepines increased from 1,135 in 1999 to 11,537 in 2017 (CDC).
- Just as we learned from the opioid epidemic, overprescribing is a big part of the problem.

In addition, more research on benzodiazepines reveals that:

- People can become dependent on them.
- In some people, the withdrawal can be severe and prolonged and may leave lasting neurological problems.
- Side effects can include daytime sedation, motor vehicle accidents, worsening anxiety and cognitive and memory impairment.
- In older adults, benzodiazepines can double the risk of falls/accidents and hip fractures.
- In older adults, benzodiazepines can cause cognitive impairment, and some studies suggest a possible association with an increased risk of dementia.

People CANNOT STOP BENZODIAZEPINES ABRUPTLY due to the risk of seizures and death. Therefore, I would like you to make an appointment to come in and discuss a plan to begin a GRADUAL taper off your medication. I emphasize the word GRADUAL. The taper would last approximately 6-12 months, or longer if necessary.

Please know that I am committed to keeping you as comfortable as possible as we taper your medication. Once people are successfully tapered off their benzodiazepines, they tend to report feeling less anxiety, more energy, better mood, clearer thinking and better memory.

Referrals to a CBT therapist provided on request.

Thank you for your understanding and I await your call.

Sincerely,

Prescriber's Name