

## Sedatives or Sleeping Pills

Sedatives or sleeping pills are medications which must be prescribed by a doctor. Using prescription medications if they were not prescribed for you by a doctor or if you do not use them according to the doctor's instructions constitutes misuse. Most sedatives belong to a group of drugs called Benzodiazepines. Benzodiazepines are minor tranquilizers (sedatives) usually prescribed to treat anxiety and to help with sleep.

### Other Names

Tranquilizers (sedatives) are usually known by their chemical (generic) name or their brand names. Different brand names may just be exactly the same drug made by different companies so it is important to look at the generic name.

Benzos, tranx, pills, sleepers, downers

### What they look like

Sedatives (tranquilizers) come in a range of colours and designs, in the form of tablets or capsules. They are generally stamped with the manufacturers name and the milligram quantity.

### Immediate effects

- Depression
- Feelings of euphoria
- Headache
- Dry mouth
- Slurred speech
- Dizziness, impaired coordination
- Drowsiness, sleepiness
- Memory loss
- Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting

### Long term effects

Some of the long-term effects of benzodiazepines are

- Confusion and difficulty thinking clearly
- Lack of motivation
- Fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping and disturbing dreams
- Anxiety
- Irritability, paranoia and aggression
- Personality changes and changes in emotional response
- Dependence

### Preventing and Reducing Harm

The effects of mixing benzodiazepines with alcohol, other prescription or over the counter medications, and/or other illicit drugs are often unpredictable. In particular,

- Mixing benzodiazepines with alcohol, opioids or other depressant drugs increases the depressant effects and can lead to breathing difficulties, increased risk of overdose and death.

### Injecting

Injecting prescription medications may cause:

- Vein damage and scarring
- Deep vein thrombosis and clots causing loss of limbs, damage to organs, stroke and possibly death
- Infection, including tetanus, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV

Sharing equipment such as needles and syringes greatly increases the risk of contracting blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

It is safest not to inject drugs. However, if you choose to inject you should always use new clean equipment. The National Alcohol and Drug Hotline *1800 250 015* can provide information on where to obtain clean needles and syringes in your state or territory.

### Legal considerations

It is illegal to use or obtain prescription medicines that were not prescribed for you or to supply your prescription medicines to someone else.