

Medications
Alprazolam
Diazepam
Lorazepam
Chloridazepoxide
Oxazepam
Clonazepam

Purpose
Expected Pharmacological Action
Benzodiazepines enhance the inhibitory effects of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) in the CNS.
Relief from anxiety occurs rapidly following administration.
Short-term use is recommended due to potential for dependency.
Therapeutic Uses
For generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and panic disorder
Trauma and stressor related disorders: acute stress disorders (ASD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
Hyperarousal manifestations of dissociative disorders
Insomnia
Muscle Spasm
Alcohol withdrawal (for prevention and treatment of acute manifestations)
Induction of anesthesia
Amnesic prior to surgery for procedures

Interactions
CNS Depressants
(alcohol, barbiturates, opioids) can result in respiratory depression.
Anticonvulsants and antihistamines can cause increased CNS depression
Client Education
Avoid alcohol and other substances that cause CNS depression.
Avoid activities that require alertness (driving)
Grapefruit Juice can reduce metabolism
High-Fat Means can reduce absorption
Avoid the use of grapefruit juice
Do not take with fatty foods

Complications
CNS Depression
Sedation, lightheadedness, ataxia, decreased cognitive function
Observe for CNS depression. Notify provider if effects occur. Avoid activities that require alertness (driving).
Avoid alcohol and other antianxiety medications due to potential depressant effects such as severe respiratory depression.
Anterograde Amnesia
Difficulty recalling events that occur after dosing
Observe for manifestations. Notify the provider if effects occur
Toxicity

Complications (cont)
Acute Toxicity.
Oral Toxicity (Drowsiness, lethargy, confusion). IV Toxicity (can lead to respiratory depression, severe hypotension, or cardiac/respiratory arrest)
Watch for manifestations. Notify the provider if these occur. For oral toxicity, gastric lavage is used, followed by the administration of activated charcoal or saline cathartics. Administer flumazenil for benzodiazepine toxicity to counteract sedation and reverse adverse effects. Monitor vital signs, maintain patient airway, and provide fluids to maintain blood pressure. Have resuscitation equipment available.
Paradoxical Response
Insomnia, excitation, euphoria, anxiety, rage
Watch for manifestations. Notify the provider if these occur.
Withdrawal Effects
Include anxiety, insomnia, diaphoresis, tremors, lightheadedness, delirium, hyperpigmentation, muscle twitching, and seizures
Withdrawal effects are not common with short term use. If taking benzodiazepines regularly and in high dose, taper the dose over several weeks

Contraindications/ Precautions

Benzodiazepines are pregnancy risk category D medications that can cause fetal harm, and harm to infants due to transmission through human milk. These medications are avoided in clients who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Benzodiazepines are classified under schedule IV of the controlled substance act.

Benzodiazepines are contraindicated in clients who have sleep apnea, respiratory depression, or glaucoma.

Use benzodiazepines cautiously in older adult clients and those who have liver disease or a history of substance use disorder.

Benzodiazepines are generally used short term due to the risk for dependence.

Nursing Administration

Administration	Client Education
Administer the medications with meals or snacks if gastrointestinal upset occurs.	Do not take benzodiazepines in larger amounts or more often than prescribed without consulting the provider.
Administer the medication at bedtime if possible due to sedation.	Dependency can develop during or after treatment. Notify the provider if indications of withdrawal occur. Store benzodiazepines in a secure place to prevent misuse by others.
Advise clients to swallow sustained-release tablets and avoid chewing or crushing the tablets	Swallow sustained-release tablets and do not crush or chew them.



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