



Sedative Medication for Flying & Procedures Policy

Document Control

A. Confidentiality Notice

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B. Document Details

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

This policy outlines the prescribing standards and clinical governance requirements for the use of sedative medications for:

- Fear of flying (aviation-related anxiety)
- Anxiety related to medical or dental procedures

The aim is to ensure patient safety, regulatory compliance, and appropriate clinical practice.

1.2 Status

In accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#), we have considered how provisions within this policy might impact on different groups and individuals. This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual, which means they may be modified or withdrawn at any time.

2 Flying and use of Benzodiazepines

2.1 Diazepam Prescribing

In line with current clinical guidance and our duty to prioritise patient safety, we no longer prescribe sedatives — including Diazepam — to help with fear of flying or to induce sleep during flights.

Why we no longer prescribe Diazepam for flights:

- **Reduced alertness and slower reactions** – Diazepam can impair cognitive function and delay response times. On a flight, this may prevent you from reacting swiftly in an emergency, potentially endangering yourself and others.
- **Increased risk of blood clots (DVT)** – Extended periods of immobility, common on flights over four hours, raise the risk of deep vein thrombosis, especially when under the influence of sedatives.
- **Possible paradoxical reactions** – A small number of people may experience agitation, restlessness or confusion instead of relaxation.
- **Interaction with alcohol** – Alcohol intensifies the sedative effects, further increasing risk of impaired coordination, drowsiness or unexpected behaviour.
- **Clinical guidelines and prescribing responsibilities** – Standard references advise against benzodiazepines for phobias or brief, situational anxiety; prescribing in such cases may be professionally or legally inadvisable.
- **Long-term considerations** – Diazepam may remain detectable in your system for some time — a concern if you are subject to drug testing. There is also evidence associating long-term benzodiazepine use with potential cognitive risks.



- **Legal or insurance implications when travelling abroad** – Some countries restrict benzodiazepines; failure to declare them may affect travel insurance cover.

2.2 Alternative Support

Instead of medication, we recommend evidence-based programmes designed to help manage flight anxiety. For example:

- [EasyJet – Fearless Flyer course](#)
- [British Airways – Flying with Confidence course](#)
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Because fear of flying is not covered under General Medical Services, GPs are not obliged to prescribe sedatives for this. If you are still seeking medication for this purpose, you may wish to consider consulting a private GP or specialist travel clinic.

3 Sedation for MRI & Other Hospital Investigations

Our policy is that sedation for hospital procedures *should not* be arranged via your GP. Instead, any sedation should be prescribed and administered by the hospital or imaging centre — under controlled, monitored conditions.

Our reasons:

- Low-dose sedatives may be ineffective or unpredictable — A small dose may not provide the desired calming effect and can lead to unexpected side effects.
- Timing issues — If your appointment is delayed, a sedative taken at home might wear off or act at an inappropriate time.
- Need for specialist monitoring — Sedation should only be given by trained staff able to provide appropriate observation and support, including access to resuscitation equipment if needed.
- Appropriate prescribing authority — Hospital specialists and radiology teams are best placed to assess, prescribe and administer sedatives as required.
- The [Royal College of Radiologists](#) recommends that sedation for imaging is administered by experienced, credentialled staff with full monitoring and safety protocols in place.

If you feel you may need sedation for a scan or test, please discuss this directly with your hospital consultant or radiology department.

4 Dental Procedures

Our policy is that sedation for dental procedures should not be arranged via your GP. Instead, any sedation should be prescribed by the dentist or surgeon carrying out your procedure. Dentists should not direct patients to GPs requesting they prescribe sedative medications, as they themselves are authorised to prescribe certain medications under the BNF.

Our reasons:



- **Possible paradoxical reactions** – A small number of people may experience agitation, restlessness or confusion instead of relaxation.
- **Clinical guidelines and prescribing responsibilities** – Standard references advise against benzodiazepines for phobias or brief, situational anxiety; prescribing in such cases may be professionally or legally inadvisable.
- **Medical Oversight:** The person prescribing the sedation should be involved in the patient's care before, during and after the procedure