

Should I stop my benzodiazepine or z-drug?

Patient decision aid: summary

Do not stop taking your benzodiazepine or z-drug suddenly



What are benzodiazepines and z-drugs?

Benzodiazepines such as diazepam and temazepam (benzos for short) are usually used to help with anxiety or problems sleeping. Benzos can be used for other conditions, such as epilepsy. Talk to your healthcare professional if this applies to you, because it may not be safe for you to reduce or stop. The z-drugs zopiclone and zolpidem are used to help with problems sleeping.



Why might I want to think about stopping?

People who take benzos or z-drugs for more than a few weeks can have trouble thinking, struggle to concentrate, feel anxious or down, and struggle to feel emotions. They can also get:

- **Tolerance** – the medicine does not work as well as it did at first. You need higher doses to get the same effect.
- **Dependence** – you need the medicine to carry out everyday activities. If you miss a dose, you may get withdrawal effects like feeling anxious.



What are my options?

Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse to agree what is right for you.

Withdrawal effects from stopping suddenly can be very serious. You could:

- **Slowly reduce your benzo or z-drug and eventually stop.** This could take many months or more than one year. You may feel better as the effects on your thinking and feelings lift. Cutting down the dose slowly can help avoid withdrawal effects. **Or**
- **Slowly cut down the dose,** but not aim to stop completely. This could take many months. This might help you feel better, but you may still have side effects. You might find you have to increase the dose again. **Or**
- **Stay as you are.** You will still have all the side effects but no withdrawal effects. You may need to increase the dose to get the same benefits you had at first. If you do, the effects on your feelings and thinking might get worse.

You can find more information in the [full patient decision aid](#).