

THE HAWTHORNS SURGERY



Diazepam & Sedatives: Our Prescribing Policy

Next Review July 2027

In short

We no longer prescribe diazepam or other sedatives for fear of flying. This reflects national guidance and the safety concerns set out below.

1. Fear of Flying

Diazepam (a benzodiazepine) was seen as a breakthrough medicine when it was introduced in the 1960s. Since then, however, the drawbacks have become clear: it can impair memory, coordination, concentration and reaction times in the short term, and long-term use carries a real risk of addiction, with withdrawal that can include seizures, hallucinations and confusion. Its use has become tightly restricted worldwide since the 1980s and 90s, and in the UK it is a Class C / Schedule IV controlled drug.

Why we don't prescribe it for flight anxiety

- **Emergency safety** – delayed reaction times and slower thinking could impair your ability to respond if there's an in-flight emergency, risking your safety and that of others.
- **Blood clot risk** – diazepam induces a type of sleep that reduces natural movement, raising the risk of DVT (deep vein thrombosis) on flights over four hours — which can be life-threatening.
- **Paradoxical reactions** – a small proportion of people become agitated, aggressive or disinhibited instead of sedated, which could endanger yourself or others and lead to legal trouble.
- **Alcohol interaction** – combining diazepam with alcohol magnifies every risk above.
- **Clinical guidelines** – the BNF advises against diazepam for phobias and short-term mild anxiety, and NICE guidance does not recommend medication for mild, self-limiting anxiety.
- **Legal risks abroad** – some countries, including parts of the Middle East, prohibit importing benzodiazepines — it may be confiscated and could lead to legal consequences.
- **Workplace drug testing** – diazepam can remain detectable for some time, which may affect a workplace drug test.
- **Dementia link** – long-term benzodiazepine use has been associated with a higher risk of dementia.

Support we recommend instead

These options are widely used and don't carry the risks above:

- Self-refer to [NHS Talking Therapies](#) or consider hypnotherapy.
- **EasyJet Fearless Flyer** – fearlessflyer.easyjet.com · 0203 813 1644
- **British Airways Flying with Confidence** – flyingwithconfidence.com · 01252 793250

Please note: fear of flying isn't covered under the NHS GP contract (General Medical Services), so we're not obliged to prescribe medication for it.