

Policy for request for Benzodiazepines prescribing for procedural-anxiety:

We are frequently contacted by patients requesting medication to help manage anxiety related to hospital investigations or procedures (such as MRI/CT scans, elective surgery, or dental treatments). We recognise that these situations can feel daunting and anxiety-provoking. In the past, GPs may have prescribed benzodiazepines such as Diazepam for their sedative and anxiolytic effects.

However, current prescribing guidance states that diazepam is licensed only for short-term use in generalised anxiety due to its potential for dependence, tolerance, and misuse. Recent advice is that these medications should **not** be prescribed by GPs for procedure-related anxiety for the following reasons:

1. Benzodiazepines can cause sedation, amnesia, and impaired motor or cognitive function. Patient responses can be unpredictable, particularly if they have not taken them before. Some individuals may experience little benefit, while others may have paradoxical reactions such as increased agitation.
2. These medications are typically taken in anticipation of a procedure (usually about an hour beforehand). Any delays can reduce their effectiveness as the effects may wear off before the procedure begins.
3. GPs do not routinely prescribe or monitor sedative medications. According to guidance from the Royal College of Radiologists, sedation for radiological procedures should be administered by appropriately trained healthcare professionals who can monitor the patient throughout.
4. Most investigations and procedures are arranged by hospital clinicians who are also qualified prescribers. If you are feeling particularly anxious, it is best to discuss this with the requesting team so they can consider appropriate support or sedation options.
5. For the dental procedures: If sedation is considered necessary for an anxious patient, the prescribing responsibility lies with the dentist, as diazepam is included in the dental practitioners' formulary within the BNF. Dentists can access relevant patient information via the Summary Care Record using systems for NHS referrals and may contact the GP for advice where there are concerns, such as in patients with complex medical histories.

As a practice, we are not aiming to be obstructive. We are following current guidance to ensure safe, consistent, and appropriate patient care is provided.

Reference:

<https://www.rcr.ac.uk/media/vfalujia/sedation-analgesia-anaesthesia-radiology-2024.pdf>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/clinical-guide-for-dental-anxiety-management/#1-introduction>

<https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summaries/sedation-anaesthesia-and-resuscitation-in-dental-practice/>