

Safely reducing medications for life's changes: benzodiazepines and "Z-drugs"



As life changes, your medication needs may change as well.

Medications that were once good for you may not be the best choice now.

Many people start benzodiazepines or Z-drugs intending to use them for just a short time, but remain on them for years.

What are benzodiazepines and Z-drugs?

These are drugs used to treat problems like anxiety or difficulty sleeping. Examples include:

- alprazolam (Xanax)
- clonazepam (Klonopin)
- diazepam (Valium)
- lorazepam (Ativan)
- temazepam (Restoril)
- eszopiclone (Lunesta)
- zaleplon (Sonata)
- zolpidem (Ambien, Ambien CR, Intermezzo)

Why consider reducing or stopping a benzodiazepine or Z-drug being used for insomnia?



These drugs can cause **dependence, memory problems, daytime fatigue,** and are linked to dementia and falls.



Many people intend to take them for short periods (up to **4 weeks**) but **remain on them for years.**



They are **not recommended** by experts (regardless of duration) for insomnia in older persons.



They may become less helpful for sleep **after only a few weeks.**

How to safely reduce or stop a benzodiazepine or Z-drug



- Your healthcare professional can work with you to make a personalized plan.
- Stopping these medications should be done carefully to reduce side effects and discomfort.
- If insomnia symptoms persist, more effective treatments for insomnia may be used instead, such as cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I).



Balanced information for better care

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