

What are Benzodiazepines?

Benzodiazepines (BZDs) are medications prescribed for acute conditions such as panic attacks, alcohol withdrawal, and seizures, as well as chronic conditions like anxiety disorders and insomnia.

For most patients, **guidelines recommend limiting BZD use to short-term treatment, typically 2–4 weeks.**



Prevalence & Risks

In 2023, approximately **1 in 12 people** in the US took BZDs.

50% of patients taking oral BZD have been taking them for two months or longer

10x higher overdose risk (often in combination with opioids)

2.6x more accidents associated with BZDs in adults over 60 (e.g., falls and motor vehicle crashes)

4.8x more cognitive problems associated with BZDs in adults over 60

Dependence vs Addiction



Physical Dependence

Nearly all patients on BZDs develop physical dependence after a month of regular use, even when taken as prescribed.



Addiction

Among people who report BZD use, less than 2% have a BZD use disorder.

Principles of Tapering

Slow

Work with your doctor to create a safe tapering plan. The plan should gradually reduce your BZD dose, **starting with a 5–10% reduction** to gauge withdrawal symptoms. Note that the tapering process may take months to years.

Patient-centered

Tapering is personalized—your symptoms guide the pace and adjustments to your tapering plan.

Flexibility

Adjustments are an important part of the process; report symptoms to your doctor.

⚠ Tapering adjustments may include:

- Smaller dose reductions
- Less frequent reductions
- Pausing the taper

Clinical Guidance

- ✓ Do **NOT** stop suddenly after more than one month of daily or near daily use.
- ✓ Work closely with your doctor.
- ✓ Withdrawal symptoms or return of original symptoms may persist after tapering. Speak with your doctor for continued support.

