

# **KIRKVIEW MEDICAL PRACTICE**

## **PRESCRIBING OF DIAZEPAM FOR FEAR OF FLYING**

### **PRACTICE POLICY**

**VERSION: 1**

**WRITTEN: JUNE 2022**

**REVIEW: JULY 2025**

Fear of flying is a phobia which can cause a great deal of distress, however anxiety about flying does not come under the remit of General Medical Services as defined in the GP contract. We are not obliged to prescribe medication to help alleviate symptoms, therefore Kirkview Medical Practice will not prescribe Diazepam for patients who wish to use the drug to help control symptoms relating to fear of flying. We have several reasons why we have taken this decision.

- Diazepam is a sedating drug. This means, the medication makes you sleepy and feel more relaxed. If there were to be an emergency during the flight, this could impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions or react to the situation. This could significantly affect the safety of you and the other passengers on the flight.
- Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when you sleep it is an unnatural non-REM sleep. This means your movements during sleep are reduced and this can place you at an increased risk of developing blood clots (DVT). These blood clots are very dangerous, and can be fatal. This risk increases more, if your flight is over 4 hours long.
- Although most people respond to Benzodiazepine medications (like Diazepam) with sedation, a small number of people experience the opposite effect and can become aggressive. This could lead to disinhibition and make you behave in ways you normally wouldn't. This could also impact on your safety, the safety of other passengers and crew members, or could lead you to getting into trouble with local Law Enforcement agencies.
- National prescribing guidelines followed by clinicians do not allow the use of Benzodiazepines in cases of fear and phobia. Any clinician prescribing Diazepam for a fear of flying would be taking a significant legal risk as prescribing would go against the guidelines. Benzodiazepine medication is only licensed for short-term use in an acute generalised anxiety state. If this is the problem you have, you should seek appropriate care and support. It would perhaps not be advisable to go on a flight.
- In several countries, Diazepam and similar drugs in the drug group are illegal. They may be confiscated, and you might find yourself in trouble with local Law Enforcement agencies for being in possession of an illegal substance.
- Diazepam has a long half-life. This means it stays in your system for a significant time, and you may fail random drug testing if you are subjected to such testing (for example, as part of your job role).

We fully understand that a fear of flying is very real, frightening and can be debilitating. However, there are much better and more effective ways of facing the issue. Consideration should be given around Fear of Flying courses, run by numerous airlines. These courses are more effective than taking medication to control your symptoms, and the positive effects of the course continue after it has been completed.

### **Fear of Flying Courses**

<b>Easy Jet</b>	<a href="http://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com">www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com</a>	Tel: 0203 813 1644
<b>British Airways</b>	<a href="http://www.flyingwithconfidence.com/courses/venues">www.flyingwithconfidence.com/courses/venues</a>	Tel: 01252 793 250
<b>Virgin Atlantic</b>	<a href="http://www.flyingwithoutfear.co.uk/collections">www.flyingwithoutfear.co.uk/collections</a>	Tel: 01423 714 900