



DRUG ALERT

July 2023

Name of Substance/ Subject	Benzodiazepines: Harm Reduction												
Description of Substance	<p>Benzodiazepines are a group of depressant (downer) drugs. When taken in high doses (or mixed with other drugs) they can depress the central nervous system and cause respiratory depression, where breathing becomes dangerously slow or stops.</p> <p>Mixing benzodiazepines with other depressants, such as alcohol, gabapentinoids or opioids, increases the risk of overdose.</p> <p>‘Street benzos’ can be sold to look like genuine medicines in branded counterfeit packaging and usually mis-sold as diazepam and referred to using generic, interchangeable names like Valium, vallies, bars and blues. Street benzos can also be sold in powder form.</p> <p>Common benzodiazepines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diazepam (Valium) • Alprazolam (Xanax) <p>Different benzodiazepines detected in Scotland in 2023, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bromazolam • Etizolam • Flubromazepam • Flubromazolam												
Outline of health risk, including symptoms, consequences of taking this substance are	<p>Common effects of benzodiazepines include:</p> <table border="0"><tr><td>*agitation</td><td>*confusion</td></tr><tr><td>*drowsiness</td><td>*euphoria</td></tr><tr><td>*memory loss and blackouts</td><td>*reduced anxiety</td></tr><tr><td>*reduced breathing</td><td>*reduced coordination</td></tr><tr><td>*reduced heart rate</td><td>*reduced response</td></tr><tr><td>*slurred speech</td><td></td></tr></table> <p>Overdose signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• unconsciousness (won’t wake with a shout or a shake)• unable to speak or respond• shallow (or slowed) breathing• snoring or rasping breaths nausea and vomiting• seizures• blue lips• pale skin <p>People may be taking a combination of drugs with different effects and the signs may not be as clear cut as the above. Some people may display all overdose signs, others will have one or two.</p>	*agitation	*confusion	*drowsiness	*euphoria	*memory loss and blackouts	*reduced anxiety	*reduced breathing	*reduced coordination	*reduced heart rate	*reduced response	*slurred speech	
*agitation	*confusion												
*drowsiness	*euphoria												
*memory loss and blackouts	*reduced anxiety												
*reduced breathing	*reduced coordination												
*reduced heart rate	*reduced response												
*slurred speech													

<p>Provide specific harm reduction advice</p>	<p>Benzodiazepine harm reduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test before use. Use the drug testing service www.wedinos.org • Dose low. Take a test dose (small part of pill or paper) and leave as long as possible between doses. • Avoid mixing with other drugs, particularly other depressants such as alcohol, opioids and gabapentinoids. This significantly increases the risk of overdose. • Use in company. Stay with people who can respond in an emergency. <p>If you or someone you are with is offered any substances that you do not recognise, please treat them with extreme caution. The only way to guarantee your personal safety or the safety of others is not to take them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If you are in any doubt, do not use these drugs.</p>
<p>What to do if the substance has been taken</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always get help quickly – stay calm, call 999 and ask for an ambulance. Give as much information as you can and be honest about what was taken. • If you are with someone please administer naloxone, if available, to reverse the effect of any opiates. Stay with the person and call 999 to ask for an ambulance.
<p>Further information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National drug alerts: www.publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR • National alert on New benzodiazepines – bromazolam: https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/rapid-action-drug-alerts-and-response-radar-alerts/radar-bromazolam-alert-2023/#section-1
<p>Alert dissemination / action required (Is the alert for information only, should specific populations or certain agencies be targeted, or is a public alert required?)</p>	<p>Alert for: People taking benzodiazepines from a non-prescribed source.</p> <p>Cascade via: Drug and alcohol services; Emergency services, Primary care, Pharmacies.</p>