



Southern Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Private & Confidential

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To: Home Managers

Re: Patients on benzodiazepines

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Many people are on benzodiazepines for a variety of reasons, such as agitation, anxiety, challenging behaviours and/or poor sleep. They might be prescribed on a regular basis or as prn (as required). This class of medication includes lorazepam, diazepam, clonazepam, temazepam and buccal midazolam, as well as zopiclone and zolpidem. There are others but these are the most widely used.

These drugs can be very effective but like all medications, they do have side effects. One of these side effects is potential respiratory depression. This is not a frequent side effect and these medications are used widely and frequently without any problem. However, as we are currently in a Covid-19 epidemic where patients can have significant respiratory symptoms, it is important when using benzodiazepines in someone who has symptoms of Covid-19, to monitor them closely after giving benzodiazepines, including their respiratory rate and seek help if you believe that their respiratory rate is decreased, or you have any other concerns about them.

We advise not making any reductions or changes to a patient's medication at this time as their normal routines and way of life will have changed dramatically due to the measures in place because of the epidemic. This will cause added stress and is therefore not a time to reduce medication. However, to use extra caution when giving benzodiazepines, and to monitor closely when using them.

If you have any concerns or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

East Hampshire Learning Disability Team