

DID YOU KNOW?

Benzodiazepines (BZs) are the most widely prescribed drugs for anxiety, stress and sleep. They are also prescribed for depression, pain, muscle relaxation and much more.

- **BZs are not recommended to be prescribed for more than 2-4 weeks.** Prescribing beyond this can result in taken-as-directed physical dependence and associated injuries/damages.
- Despite the frequency with which these drugs are prescribed, many health professionals remain ill-informed about them.
- Experts say BZs can be harder to withdraw from than heroin.
- Withdrawal can be horrific and debilitating, causing symptoms that may last for months or even many years (withdrawal experiences/severity may vary by individual).
- BZs have different potencies and they do not mix well with other drugs/substances (alcohol, opiates, sedative antidepressants). Some combinations can be lethal.
- Recent studies associate prolonged BZ use with irreversible damages and an increased risk of dementia.
- Social costs: unemployment, suicides, domestic disharmony, falls, fractures, accidents, etc.
- Experts have been lobbying governments (especially in the UK) for decades for stricter controls of BZs, but to no avail.
- In 2008, approximately 5.2% of US adults aged 18 to 80 years used benzodiazepines. In the US, prescriptions for benzodiazepines have more than tripled and fatal overdoses have more than quadrupled in the past 20 years. The percentage who used benzodiazepines increased with age and was nearly twice as prevalent in women as men. The proportion of benzodiazepine use that was long term increased with age from 14.7% (18-35 years) to 31.4% (65-80 years).
- There's an estimated 1.5 million people suffering from taken-as-prescribed (iatrogenic) BZ dependency in England.
- **It is dangerous to abruptly stop or quickly reduce these drugs** (may cause seizures, psychosis and/or death in some cases).
- Anyone thinking about stopping should consult *The Ashton Manual* (www.benzo.org.uk/manual) and their prescriber. Beware that medical professionals may be ill-informed about BZD dependence and slow tapering protocols, but their cooperation may be necessary. Please show them *The Ashton Manual* after reading it yourself.

You do not have to be an addict to be sickened by these drugs. Most people harmed take them as prescribed.

Could you, or someone you know, be taking benzodiazepines?
(See basic list of benzodiazepines on reverse side)