

Use of Benzodiazepines for the Treatment of Anxiety and Insomnia at _____

Benzodiazepines are medications which are sometimes used to treat anxiety and insomnia.

They include:

- Ativan (lorazepam)
- Klonopin (clonazepam)
- Valium (diazepam)
- Xanax (alprazolam)

While these medications can be effective for short term use, they can have serious side effects and health risks when used for longer periods. They have been shown to increase the risk of death by accidental overdose, as well as falls, memory impairment, and confusion.

Benzodiazepines are habit forming. Once a person has been on them for more than a few weeks, stopping abruptly can cause serious withdrawal including worsening anxiety, trouble sleeping, shakiness, seizures, hallucinations, and in extreme cases, death.

In combination with other sedating medications/drugs, such as Oxycodone, methadone, heroin and other opioids, benzodiazepines increase the risk of fatal overdose.

Because of the above CMHA has put extra safety precautions in place.

1. Your psychiatrist or nurse practitioner will conduct a thorough evaluation to determine your diagnosis. This includes:
 - a. questions about how you feel now, and about symptoms and treatment(s) you have had in the past.
 - b. Your medical history and any current or past use of alcohol, medications, and street drugs. We may ask you for a urine screen, and we collect information from the state database about your medication history. We will ask for your consent to contact previous providers, and family members for additional information. For your safety, it is important that you provide us with thorough and honest information.
2. Your prescriber may suggest treatment with alternative medication or may recommend effective non-medication therapies and lifestyle changes.
3. If the decision is made to prescribe a Benzodiazepine, we will aim for the lowest effective dose, and will regularly assess the need for continued treatment. Urine drug screens, checking the state medication database and ongoing collaboration with other providers will be maintained.
4. To receive ongoing prescriptions, follow up appointments will need to be kept. An in person appointment is necessary to assess the safety, effectiveness and overall appropriateness of treatment.
5. At any point in treatment, we may discuss the need to lower your dose and/or taper you off the medication while providing alternative mode(s) of treatment.