



Benzodiazepines



Benzodiazepines AKA **benzos, sleepers, jellies, rohys, vallies, roofies, moggies.**

What are they?

Benzodiazepines (often called benzos) are a group of drugs known as minor tranquillisers. Benzos are generally prescribed by doctors to help people with anxiety or sleep problems to help them to relax. Used in the short term, they can be really helpful however people often use them recreationally as well. There are a lot of different types of benzos and they are all sold under different brand names – same class, different drug.



The only "safe way" to use benzodiazepines is under close medical supervision, however, if you are choosing to use recreationally, it is important that you use as safely as possible.

What do they do?

What benzos do to you depends on the type of benzo you are using, how many you've taken, whether you are using them on their own or with something else, your size and the kind of mood you are in. Generally speaking, benzos help you to relax, feel less anxious and make you feel sleepy. They can also make you feel really warm and fuzzy.



Benzos and your mental health

People often take benzos because they feel anxious or worried and they want to relax. When you stop taking benzos, you can get this thing called "rebound anxiety" which is where your anxiety comes back and it feels twice as strong. Coming off benzos can also cause panicky feelings and insomnia.

The effects of benzos



The effects of benzos depend on what you've taken. They all last for different amounts of time in your body - this is called a "half-life". Generally the effects will last up to 24 hours and you may find it difficult to sleep once they have worn off. It might take only a little while to develop a "tolerance" (having to take more to get the same effect) to benzos.



Benzodiazepines



What happens if I stop using?

Giving up benzos can be tricky because your body has to get used to functioning without them. If you are dependent on benzos and you suddenly stop taking them, you might get withdrawal symptoms including insomnia, anxiety, depression, restlessness, muscle pains, twitching and seizures. It's a good idea to have a chat to a general practitioner (GP) to discuss the safest way of cutting down your benzo use.



When someone overdoses

In some cases, taking too many benzos can cause someone to overdose. How this looks may be different depending on what's happening for the person (e.g. they may have mixed benzos with other drugs), but overdose can cause irregular or shallow breathing, loss of consciousness, even coma or death. If someone looks like they may have overdosed, some sensible things you can do are:



Call 000 – you won't get into trouble for asking for help.



Don't leave your friend alone.



Put your friend on their side if they are unconscious or in case they vomit.



Keep an eye on their breathing.

Staying safe

If you are going to use benzos recreationally, there will always be the risk of bad things happening. You can reduce some of this risk by:



Going low, going slow. Just use half or one at a time and wait to see what it feels like.



Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol – it can get out of control quickly. If you use benzos with other depressants (e.g. alcohol) it can increase your risk of overdose.



Only using with people you trust. It's good if someone in your group isn't using to keep an eye on you. Keep an eye on your mates too.



Avoiding injecting benzos. They are intended to be swallowed in tablet/capsule form.



Take a break. Make sure that you have benzo free days and try not to use them before anything big (e.g. exams).



Calling an ambulance (000) if things get bad.

Getting help

If your benzo use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)