

Activities to help in withdrawal from benzodiazepines

- **TAKING CARE WITH DIET:** Many people experience either an increase in appetite or loss of appetite in withdrawal. Make the effort to maintain a healthy diet. Ask for help, as sometimes you may feel too sick to prepare food. Diet can be an important element in maintaining your energy levels and ability to cope with withdrawal. Cut down or eliminate stimulants such as coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate and nicotine from your diet.
- **CUTTING DOWN OR STOPPING ALCOHOL:** Try to be abstinent whilst coming off your pills and during the withdrawal period. People have reported that if they do drink during withdrawal their symptoms worsen; also there is a danger of gradually increasing your alcohol intake as you reduce your benzodiazepine intake.
- **EXERCISING:** Gentle exercise such as walking or swimming should be undertaken daily. Agoraphobia is a common withdrawal symptom so try to get out for a walk if possible. If you are used to being very active in sport and/or it is your preferred method of relaxation, then continue, but you need to be aware that muscle spasm is common in withdrawal and you may feel exceptionally sore after a day of sport. You may also notice that your performance is not as good as you would expect.
- **KEEPING A DIARY:** Making notes in a daily diary can help to give you a sense of achievement and is also useful in recording strategies that have helped you cope with the withdrawal. Diaries can also be useful if you are working through emotional issues.
- **PRACTISING A RELAXATION OR MEDITATION TECHNIQUE, OR ABDOMINAL BREATHING TECHNIQUE:** Almost all people experience raised anxiety levels as part of the withdrawal syndrome and, of course, many people were originally prescribed benzodiazepines for anxiety. Therefore it is useful to use a relaxation/meditation technique in order to manage your anxiety. A simple Yoga deep breathing technique or counting technique is useful for controlling bouts of anxiety and for control of panic attacks during withdrawal.
- **COUNSELLING:** Some withdrawal is straightforward and requires no more than knowledge of a reducing regime and some information and support; you may find, however, that you need more intensive counselling to enable you to cope effectively without pills.

Counselling is available from our Benzodiazepine Withdrawal Program. Alternatively, ask your doctor for a good counselling service or contact your local Community Health Centre or nearest Alcohol & Drug Centre.