

MICKLEOVER SURGERY

Fear of Flying, Requests for Sedative Medication & Advice Leaflet

We understand that many people have anxiety about flying. It is common for patients to ask for sedative medication (such as diazepam) to help manage this fear. Mickleover Surgery does not prescribe sedatives for patients anxious about flying. Please see below the reason why we have taken this decision.

Safety on board

- Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when you do sleep it is an unnatural (non-REM) sleep. This means you won't move around as much as during natural sleep. There is concern this can cause you to be at increased risk of developing a blood clot (DVT) in the leg or even the lung which can be dangerous. This risk is greater if your flight is greater than four hours
- Sedative drugs make you sleepy, more relaxed and can significantly delay your reaction times. If there is an emergency during the flight it may impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions and react to the situation

Medical risks

- Whilst most people find sedative medications like diazepam have a relaxing effect, a small number of people can feel more agitated or even aggressive after taking it. Diazepam can also cause disinhibition and lead you to behave in a way that you would not normally.
- Sedatives increase the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT), especially on longer flights, as they reduce movement during sleep.
- They can affect breathing by causing mild respiratory depression. At altitude, where oxygen levels are already lower, this effect may become more significant.
- Combining sedatives with alcohol (often consumed by nervous flyers) increases the risk of complications.
- Diazepam and other sedatives stay in your system for quite a while. If your job requires you to submit to random drug testing, you may fail this having taken diazepam.
- Sedatives carry a risk of dependence and, with regular use, may be linked to cognitive side effects.

Guideline and clinical reasons

- Diazepam and similar drugs are illegal in a number of countries. They may be confiscated or you may find yourself in trouble with the police if you are carrying any on arrival.
- Prescribing guidelines doctors follow (known as the BNF), don't recommend using benzodiazepines like diazepam in phobias. We would be acting against these guidelines if we prescribe.

We appreciate that fear of flying is very real and very frightening. A lower risk approach is to tackle this properly and hopefully permanently, with a Fear of Flying course run by the airlines and we have listed a number of these below or there are also some free online courses:

- Easy Jet www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com Tel: 0203 8131644
- British Airways www.flyingwithconfidence.com Tel: 01252 793250
- Virgin Tel: 01423 714900

Good advice and techniques can be found here:

- <https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-manage-flight-anxiety>