

This resource provides a summary of benzodiazepines, including info on what they are, how they affect your mind and body, what happens when you have too many, mixing with other drugs, ways you can be safer and where to get support if you feel like you need it.

Also known as: Benzodiazepines, tranx, sleepers, downers, xannies, serras, moggies, normies.

What are benzos?

Benzos are medicine that is used to help people sleep and manage anxiety. It's a depressant drug, which means it slows down how your brain talks to other parts of your body. Benzos come as pills or tablets that are swallowed.¹

How benzos can make you feel (short-term):

Your mood before you use benzos, the people you are with, and the surroundings you're in can impact your experience. You might feel:



happy

confident

relaxed

confused

calm

sad.²

What benzos can do to your body (short-term):



dry mouth

shakes

blurry vision

headache

trouble speaking

sleepy

clumsy or wobbly

feeling sick.²

dizzy

This depends on your size/weight and health, if you're used to taking benzos, if other drugs are taken around the same time, how much you use, and the strength of the benzos.

How long do benzos last?

This will depend on which type of benzo you are taking. They can be either short-acting, medium-acting or long-acting.

What happens when I take too many benzos?

Taking lots of benzos can slow down a person's breathing too much. This is an overdose and can lead to death.

You might also experience:

- anger or confusion
- feeling extremely sleepy
- anxious and unable to relax
- blackouts or coma.³

If you or someone you know reacts like this after taking benzos, call triple zero (000) immediately. Ambulance officers do not have to involve the police unless there is a threat to their safety.

What happens if I use benzos for a long time?

Using benzos regularly may lead to:

- trouble with thinking and memory loss
- increased risk of falls and injury
- feeling sick a lot and dealing with headaches
- feeling anxious or sad a lot
- feeling very sleepy and unmotivated all the time
- addiction/dependence.^{3,4}



What happens when I stop using benzos after a while?

Giving up benzos after a long time can be hard because the body is not used to going without them, and you can go into withdrawal. Benzo withdrawal is serious and can sometimes cause death.

You might experience:

- headaches
- sore muscles
- dizziness and shaking
- feeling sick and vomiting
- bad dreams and trouble sleeping
- seeing and hearing things that aren't there
- feeling paranoid
- seizures.^{1, 3, 5}

It's important to speak to a doctor if you want to stop taking benzos. You can also call one of the support numbers at the end of this page.

What happens when I mix benzos with other drugs?



Benzos + cocaine: benzos can lessen the effects of cocaine a bit.⁴



Benzos + ice: benzos slow down your heart rate and ice speeds it up, masking the effects of each other. Depending on how much you take, you could overdose on either drug if one wears off before the other.⁴



Benzos + GHB/heroin/alcohol: high risk of overdose, may feel clumsy or wobbly, slow breathing, sick and vomiting, memory loss, passing out, and possible death.⁴

How can I stay safer?

- Always take prescription benzos as instructed by your doctor or the packaging.
- Speak to your doctor about safety when driving or operating machinery.
- Be aware of falls and injuries.
- Avoid using if you have breathing problems, sleep apnoea or liver/kidney disease.
- Be cautious of novel benzos – these are 'fake' copies of benzos that can have stronger and more unpredictable effects.⁴

Where to get support:

National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline (24/7): 1800 250 015

You can speak with a counsellor over the phone, get information on drugs and links to support services. They speak to family and friends too.

13 Yarn (24/7): 13 92 76

If you need some crisis support, you can get free assistance from this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support line.

Brother to Brother (24/7): 1800 435 799

Free 24-hour crisis line to support Aboriginal men experiencing issues relating to relationships, family violence, drugs and alcohol.

Yarning Safe and Strong (24/7): 1800 959 563

A service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. You can get free counselling over the phone. They can also support friends and families who need to have a yarn with someone about their wellbeing.

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS): 03 9419 3000

Provides a wide range of in-person health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria. You can find similar services in different locations across Australia using HealthInfoNet's resource: [Map of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health/medical services.](#)

References

1. Tucker JA, Darke, S, Lappin, J, Farrell, M. The Clinician's Guide to Illicit Drugs and Health: Silverback Publishing; 2019 [26.10.2023]. Available from: <https://adf.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1099867245>.
2. Brands B, Sproule B, Marshman J. Drugs and Drug Abuse. Toronto: Addiction Research Foundation; 1998 [22.02.2023]. Available from: <https://adf.on.worldcat.org/oclc/38900581>
3. Ritter A, King T, Hamilton M. Drug use in Australian society. South Melbourne, Vic: Oxford University Press; 2017 [05.07.2023]. Available from: <https://adf.on.worldcat.org/oclc/969121573>.
4. Hi-Ground. Benzos [24.05.2023]. Available from: <https://hi-ground.org/substances/benzos/>.
5. Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). Prescribing drugs of dependence in general practice, Part B- Benzodiazepines. East Melbourne: RACGP; 2015.

This resource has been developed in collaboration with



Artwork by Mumbulla Creative