

Howden Medical Centre Fear of Flying policy:

The doctors at Howden Medical Centre will no longer prescribe diazepam, or any other benzodiazepines to treat 'fear of flying'. The reasons are outlined below:

1. The use of this class of drug will depress the central nervous system which causes longer reaction times & slowed thinking. During a flight this could put the passenger at significant risk of not being able to act in a manner which could save their life in the event of a safety critical incident. Incapacitation from benzodiazepines is a risk to the lives of all onboard the aircraft in the event of an emergency requiring evacuation.
2. The risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis is potentially increased with depression of the nervous system. These drugs can induce non-REM sleep which tends to be of a type where the person does not move in their sleep, and therefore increases the possibility of sitting without moving for more than 4 hrs (the amount of time which has been shown to increase the risk of developing DVT whether in an aeroplane or elsewhere).
3. An increase in aggression may be reported by patients taking benzodiazepines and therefore has potential to put other occupants of the aircraft at risk.
4. Benzodiazepine use added to alcohol consumption causes an increase in the risk posed by many of the points above.
5. For some countries, it is illegal to import these drugs, e.g. in the Middle East, and so the passenger will need to use a different strategy for the homeward bound journey and / or any subsequent legs of the journey.
6. NICE guidelines suggest that Benzodiazepines are only advised for the short-term use for a crisis in generalised anxiety disorder, i.e. acute anxiety emergencies. Fear of flying in isolation is not a generalised anxiety disorder.
7. Diazepam is a Class C Controlled drug.

There are fear of flying courses available in the UK which are easily accessible by those who genuinely wish to fly & conquer their fear of flying, for example:

EasyJet - <https://fearlessflyer.easyjet.com/>

British Airways - <https://flyingwithconfidence.com/>

Virgin Atlantic - <https://flyingwithoutfear.co.uk/>

Patients are asked not to make appointments for these types of requests as we will not prescribe diazepam. Please respect our receptionists when they explain this is practice policy, and why an appointment is not appropriate.