

## **Policy on Prescribing Diazepam for Fear of Flying**

At Cadbury Heath Health Centre (CHHC), we prioritise the safety and well-being of our patients. We understand that fear of flying can be a significant source of anxiety; however, after careful consideration and in line with national guidelines, our practice no longer prescribes Diazepam or other sedatives for this purpose. Diazepam is a controlled medication with risks including dependency, side effects like drowsiness, and impaired coordination, which can be dangerous during travel. Additionally, sedatives can mask symptoms of underlying health issues and reduce the ability to respond effectively in emergencies during a flight. The use of such medications also carries legal implications in some countries, where traveling with controlled substances may result in penalties.

Instead of prescribing Diazepam, we encourage patients to explore safer and more effective methods to manage their anxiety, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), relaxation techniques, or consultation with a specialised therapist. You may, however, consult with a private doctor/GP to obtain a private prescription if you still feel one is needed. We are committed to supporting our patients in finding the right approach to address their fears without compromising their safety or well-being.

### **What are the alternatives?**

For patients who experience fear of flying, there are several effective alternatives to Diazepam and other sedatives:

#### **1. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):**

**Overview:** CBT is a structured form of therapy that helps individuals challenge and change unhelpful thoughts and behaviours. For fear of flying, CBT focuses on identifying the anxiety triggers and developing coping strategies to manage them.

**Effectiveness:** Studies have shown CBT to be highly effective in reducing flight-related anxiety. It often involves gradual exposure to the feared situation, which can help desensitize patients over time.

#### **2. Relaxation Techniques:**

**Deep Breathing Exercises:** Controlled breathing can help calm the nervous system and reduce anxiety symptoms. Techniques like diaphragmatic breathing or the 4-7-8 breathing method are simple yet effective.

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** This involves tensing and relaxing different muscle groups, helping to reduce physical tension associated with anxiety.

**Meditation and Mindfulness:** Practicing mindfulness helps individuals stay present and reduce the intensity of anxious thoughts. Apps and guided meditation sessions can be useful tools for practicing this technique.

### 3. Exposure Therapy:

**Overview:** A type of behavioural therapy where patients gradually expose themselves to the fear-inducing situation (e.g., flying) in a controlled and safe environment. This can be done through virtual reality simulations or through real-life practice with the guidance of a therapist.

**Effectiveness:** Over time, repeated exposure can help reduce the anxiety associated with flying.

### 4. Education and Knowledge:

**Flight Familiarisation:** Understanding the mechanics of flight and what to expect during the journey can help alleviate fear. Some airports and airlines offer familiarisation programs where patients can learn more about the flight process in a non-threatening environment.

**Workshops or Courses:** Some organisations offer fear of flying courses led by experts, including psychologists and pilots, providing practical advice and support.

### 5. Medication-Free Support:

**Herbal Supplements:** Some patients find natural supplements like valerian root or lavender helpful, though they should consult with a healthcare provider first to avoid any potential interactions.

**Distraction Techniques:** Listening to calming music, watching a movie, or engaging in other activities during the flight can help divert attention away from anxious thoughts.

These alternatives can be tailored to individual needs and are considered safer and more sustainable approaches for managing the fear of flying.