

## BENZODIAZEPINES

- **Benzodiazepines** do not cure anything: they merely alleviate the symptoms temporarily.
- **Benzodiazepines** are indicated for short-term use only (2-4 weeks)
- **Some adverse effects of long-term use**
  - Oversedation* – traffic and home accidents
  - Drug interactions* – especially with respiratory depressants
  - Memory and cognitive impairment*
  - Paradoxical stimulation*
  - Elderly* – confusion, amnesia, falls and fractures, “pseudodementia”
  - Pregnancy* – floppy infant syndrome, neonatal withdrawal reaction
  - Tolerance* – dependence, addiction, abuse potential
  - Social costs* – aggression, antisocial acts, shoplifting, family disharmony, job loss

### Some common benzodiazepine withdrawal symptoms

<i>Anxiety, panic attacks, agoraphobia</i>	<i>Perceptual disturbance, sense of movement, Depersonalisation, derealisation</i>
<i>Insomnia, nightmares</i>	<i>Hallucinations (visual, auditory)</i>
<i>Depression, dysphoria</i>	<i>Distortion of body image</i>
<i>Poor memory and concentration</i>	<i>Tingling, numbness, altered sensation</i>
<i>Dizziness, light headedness</i>	<i>Sensory hypersensitivity (light, sound, taste, smell)</i>
<i>Weakness ('jelly legs')</i>	<i>Muscle twitches, jerks, fasciculation</i>
<i>Tremor</i>	<i>Tinnitus</i>
<i>Muscle pain, stiffness</i>	<i>Psychotic symptoms*</i>
<i>Palpitations</i>	<i>Confusion, delirium*</i>
<i>Blurred, or double vision</i>	<i>Convulsions*</i>

\*Usually only on rapid or abrupt withdrawal from high doses of benzodiazepines

**Further information** on [www.benzo.org.uk](http://www.benzo.org.uk)

'Ashton Manual' (2002); Supplement (2011) and references on line