

## EASTGATE MEDICAL GROUP

### INCLUDING HASTINGS MEDICAL CENTRE

#### Policy on the Prescription of Diazepam for Fear of Flying

##### Purpose:

To provide a clear and consistent approach to the prescribing of diazepam (or other benzodiazepines) in the context of fear of flying, in accordance with current clinical guidelines, safety considerations, and professional responsibilities.

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##### Policy Statement:

This practice **does not prescribe diazepam (or other benzodiazepines)** for the purpose of managing fear of flying (aviophobia). This decision is based on **patient safety, ethical prescribing standards, and national guidance.**

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##### Rationale:

###### 1. Safety Risks:

- Diazepam is a sedative and can cause **drowsiness, confusion, impaired coordination, and respiratory depression.**
- Diazepam is only licensed short term for a crisis in generalised anxiety. Fear of flying is not a generalised anxiety disorder.

###### 2. Legal and Ethical Concerns:

- Diazepam is a **controlled drug** and its carriage across international borders may be **illegal** in some countries. For further information see the NaTHNaC Travel Pro website <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/43/medicines-and-travel>
- The prescribing guidelines doctors follow (British National Formulary) advises 'the use of benzodiazepines to treat short-term 'mild' anxiety is inappropriate' and 'benzodiazepines should be used to treat insomnia only when it is severe, disabling or causing the patient extreme distress.' Doctors would be taking a significant legal risk prescribing against these guidelines.
- The use of sedatives for non-medical purposes may conflict with professional **ethical prescribing** responsibilities.
- Flight anxiety is not under the remit of General Medical Services as defined in the GP contract. The contract advises that an NHS prescription should not be provided for medication which is requested solely in anticipation of the onset of an ailment whilst outside the UK, but for which treatment is not required at the time of prescribing. It is therefore recommended that an NHS prescription is not provided for fear of flying.

### 3. Lack of Evidence for Effectiveness:

- There is **limited clinical evidence** supporting the use of benzodiazepines for managing situational anxiety such as fear of flying.
- Prescribing in this context may reinforce **avoidance behaviours** and hinder long-term coping strategies.

### 4. Alternative Approaches Available:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)** and **fear of flying courses** (often run by airlines) are proven, safer, and more sustainable methods to manage aviophobia. Further information and useful courses can be found using the links below.

[How to manage a fear of flying and flying anxiety](#)

[Fear of flying course | Fearless Flyer](#)

[Flying with confidence | Information | British Airways](#)

[Flying Without Fear | Courses to Conquer Your Fear of Flying](#)

- Self-help resources and psychological support are more appropriate long-term solutions.

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### Review and Governance:

- This policy will be reviewed in response to new clinical guidance or significant incidents.
- Feedback from patients and staff will be considered during policy reviews to ensure it remains relevant and supportive.

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**Approval Date:** February 2025

**Review Date:** February 2028

**Approved by:** Clinical Team