

# Diazepam

## **Why is this medication prescribed?**

Diazepam is used to treat anxiety and muscle spasms. The injection form is used when the medication cannot be taken by mouth. It is also used in patients with alcohol withdrawal to prevent seizures and treat other symptoms (e.g., agitation, anxiety, hallucinations).

This medication belongs to a class of drugs called benzodiazepines, which act on the brain and nerves (central nervous system) to produce a calming effect. It works by enhancing the effects of a certain natural chemical in the body (GABA) that causes calm.

## **How should this medicine be used?**

Do not mix with other medications in the same syringe/solution. This medication is given by injection into a vein or deep into a muscle by a health care professional. Giving the medication too fast can cause heart problems. If giving this medication into a vein, inject it slowly into a large vein because the medication is very irritating to the vein. Do not inject this medication into an artery or into the skin.

The liquid should be clear to pale yellow. Before using this product, check it visually for particles or discoloration. If either is present, do not use the liquid.

You will be closely monitored for several hours after receiving this medication. If your doctor orders you to continue to receive this medication, you should be switched to a form that can be taken by mouth as soon as possible.

## **Other uses for this medicine**

This medication is also used for short-term treatment of serious seizures that do not stop (status epilepticus). It is not for ongoing daily use to prevent seizures.

It is also used before surgeries or procedures to cause drowsiness, decrease anxiety, and cause forgetfulness about the procedure or surgery.

## **What special precautions should I follow?**

Before using diazepam, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or to other benzodiazepines (e.g., chlordiazepoxide); or if you have any other allergies.

Before using this medicine, consult your doctor or pharmacist if you have: breathing trouble during sleep (sleep apnea), severe breathing problems (except in patients who are breathing with help from a machine), certain blood disorder (porphyria), certain eye problem (glaucoma), a certain muscle disease (myasthenia gravis).

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy. For at least 3 hours after receiving this drug, you should not get out of bed without help. Do not drive, use machinery, or do any activity that requires alertness until the effects of the medication wear off (at least 24 hours). Avoid alcoholic beverages.

Caution is advised when using this drug in children because it may affect children differently, causing restlessness or mental/mood changes (e.g., agitation, hallucinations) instead of calm. A preservative (benzyl alcohol) that may be found in this product or in the liquid used to mix this product can infrequently cause serious problems (sometimes death) if more than 100 milligrams daily is given to an infant during the first months of life.

This medication is not recommended for use during pregnancy. It may harm an unborn baby. This drug may pass into breast milk and have undesirable effects on a nursing infant.

### **What should I do if I forget a dose?**

Not applicable. This medication is not usually given on a regular schedule.

### **What side effects can this medication cause?**

Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects:

- confusion, unusual thoughts or behavior;
- unusual risk-taking behavior, decreased inhibitions, no fear of danger;
- depressed mood, thoughts of suicide or hurting yourself;
- hyperactivity, agitation, hostility;
- hallucinations;
- feeling light-headed, fainting;
- muscle twitching, tremor;
- fever, chills, body aches, flu symptoms;
- jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes); or
- urinating less than usual or not at all.

Less serious side effects are more likely to occur, such as:

- drowsiness, tiredness;
- blurred vision;
- sleep problems (insomnia);
- muscle weakness, lack of balance or coordination;
- slurred speech;
- nausea, vomiting, constipation;
- headache;
- drooling;
- skin rash; or
- loss of interest in sex.

### **What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?**

Store vials at room temperature between 20-25 degrees C. Brief storage between 15-30 degrees C is permitted. Store away from light and moisture

In case of emergency/overdose

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

**What other information should I know?**

This medication may cause dependence, especially if it has been used regularly for an extended time or if it has been used in high doses. In such cases, withdrawal reactions (e.g., shakiness, trouble sleeping, muscle cramps, vomiting, sweating, seizures, mental/mood changes such as anxiety/agitation) may occur if you suddenly stop this drug. To prevent withdrawal reactions when stopping extended, regular treatment with this drug, gradually reduce the dosage as directed.

Do not use this medication if you are allergic to diazepam or to other benzodiazepines, such as alprazolam, chlordiazepoxide , clorazepate , lorazepam , or oxazepam.

This medication can cause birth defects in an unborn baby. Do not use diazepam if you are pregnant.

Diazepam may be habit-forming and should be used only by the person it was prescribed for. Diazepam should never be shared with another person, especially someone who has a history of drug abuse or addiction. Keep the medication in a secure place where others cannot get to it.

