

## **Kinneil Medical Practice**

### **Sedatives and Flying Policy**

Kinneil Medical Practice does not prescribe sedatives (e.g. diazepam) or sleeping tablets (e.g. Zopiclone) for fear of flying or sleeping on a flight. You may previously have been prescribed these medications for this, but the practice has changed their policy. This policy decision has been made by the GP Partners and is adhered to by all prescribers working in the practice following up to date guidance from the Forth Valley Health Board Prescribing Group supported by Aviation Medicine Specialists.

The reasons for this can be found below:

- Diazepam and similar drugs are a sedative, which means it makes you sleepy, more relaxed and can significantly delay your reaction times. If there is an emergency during the flight it may impair your ability to concentrate, follow instructions and react to the situation. This could have serious safety consequences for you and those around you.
- Sedative drugs can make you fall asleep, however when you do sleep, it is an unnatural (non-REM) sleep. This means you won't move around as much as during natural sleep. This can cause you to be at increased risk of developing a blood clot (DVT) in the leg or even the lung. Blood clots are very dangerous and can prove fatal. This risk is even greater if your flight is longer than four hours.
- Whilst most people find sedative medications, like diazepam, have a relaxing effect, a small number of people can feel more agitated or even aggressive after taking it. Diazepam and other sedatives can also cause disinhibition and lead you to behave in a way that you would not normally. This could impact on your safety as well as that of other passengers and could also get you into trouble with the law.
- According to the prescribing guidelines doctors follow, known as the BNF, benzodiazepines, like diazepam, are not recommended for use in phobias. Your doctor would be taking a significant legal risk by prescribing against these guidelines. They are only licensed for short term use during a crisis in generalised anxiety. If this is the case, you should be getting proper care and support for your mental health and not going on a flight.

- Diazepam and similar medications are illegal in several countries. They may be confiscated, or you may find yourself in trouble with the police if you are carrying any on arrival.
- Diazepam stays in your system for quite a while. If your job requires you to submit to random drug testing, you may fail this having taken diazepam.

We appreciate sleeping on long haul flights can be an issue for many but resorting to medication or alcohol for this can be detrimental to your health, safety and other passengers' safety.

We appreciate that fear of flying is real and very frightening. This can be managed more effectively in the long term by undertaking a “Fear of Flying Course” run by several airlines. We have listed a number of these below:

- Easy Jet [www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com](http://www.fearlessflyer.easyjet.com) Tel: **0203 8131644**
- British Airways [www.flyingwithconfidence.com](http://www.flyingwithconfidence.com) Tel: **01252 793250**
- Virgin Tel: **01423 714900**

Please also note that the advice above also applies to the use of sedatives for dental appointments, hospital scans or other procedures, and the practice would not issue medication in these circumstances.

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