

## Benzodiazepine Tapering Algorithm

Has the patient been on benzodiazepine for over 6 months?

- Consider initiating Benzo/Stimulant/hypnotic agreement
- Consider UA testing with PPMD
- Consider PMP review

NO

YES

Recommend up to 2 month taper

### Resources

Providence Recovery Center  
916 Pacific Ave  
Everett, WA  
425-258-7390

Evergreen Recovery Center  
2601 Summit Ave  
Everett, WA  
425-258-2407

Swedish Addiction Recovery - Ballard  
5300 Tallman Ave N.W.  
Seattle, WA  
206-781-6048

### References:

Myrick H, Malcom R, Randal PK, et al. A double-blind trial of gabapentin versus lorazepam in the treatment of alcohol withdrawal. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res.* 2009 Sep, 33(9):1582-8

Voris J, Smith NL, Rao SM, et al. Gabapentin for the treatment of ethanol withdrawal. *Substance Abuse* 2003, June 24, (2): 129-32.

Bozikas V, Petrikis P, Gamvrula K, et al. Treatment of alcohol withdrawal with gabapentin. *Prog Neuropsychopharmacol Biol Psychiatry.* 2002 Jan; 26(1):197-9.

Crockford D, White WD, Campbell B. Gabapentin use in benzodiazepine dependence and detoxification. *Can J Psychiatry* 2001 Apr; 46(30): 287

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Did patient have an anxiety disorder before initiation of benzodiazepine(s)?

- Consider GAD-7 and PHQ-2 (PHQ-9)

NO

YES

See Benzo Taper Tables:

- Taper benzodiazepine over 2-6 months (longer for higher doses)
- Patients experiencing difficulty with taper may benefit from:
- Gabapentin 300 mg HS the day before stopping the final 10-20% of benzodiazepine dose.
  - Titrate to gabapentin 300 mg TID - QID
  - Continue gabapentin for 3 months or longer depending on benzodiazepine dose and duration

Consider alternatives for:

- 1) Sleep
  - a) Sleep hygiene
  - b) Medication at HS
    - i) Doxepin 10mg/mL 3-6 mg at bedtime or
    - ii) Melatonin 0.5-6mg 30 min to 4 hours before HS
    - iii) Trazodone 25-50 mg at bedtime or
    - iv) Nortriptyline 10-20mg at bedtime (avoid in elderly) or
    - v) Diphenhydramine –avoid in elderly
  - c) Consider BH referral for sleep CBT
  - d) Consider sleep referral if 30 days meds ineffective
- 2) Restless leg syndrome: pramipexole or ropinirole
- 3) Spasticity – baclofen or tizanidine

Prior to beginning taper:

1. Initiate an SSRI
2. Over 3 weeks, increase dose to moderate or high (sertraline 100-200 mg daily or equivalent)
3. For breakthrough panic attacks, consider either:
  - a. Propranolol 10-20mg before event
  - b. Hydroxyzine 10mg upto QID (avoid in elderly)

Initiate benzo taper using 16 week taper plan. Recommend monthly assessment OV

If SSRI initiation and planned taper not successful or resisted, obtain Behavioral Health consult