



TILE HOUSE SURGERY
— BRENTWOOD —

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Fear of Flying (Aviophobia) and Diazepam – Important Information

Some patients request diazepam or similar sedative medication to help with anxiety when flying. This document explains why diazepam is not safe or appropriate for fear of flying and sets out Tile House Surgery's prescribing position.

Our prescribing position (explicit)

Tile House Surgery does NOT prescribe diazepam, lorazepam, or other benzodiazepines for fear of flying (aviophobia), flight anxiety, or to help with sleep during flights. This policy applies regardless of flight length, destination, or previous use.

Why diazepam is not safe for flying

Diazepam is a benzodiazepine sedative. National NHS, NICE and British National Formulary (BNF) guidance does not recommend benzodiazepines for phobias such as fear of flying.

Medical and safety risks during flights include:

- Reduced alertness, slower reaction times and impaired ability to follow instructions in an emergency
- Increased risk of blood clots (deep vein thrombosis) due to reduced movement and unnatural deep sedation
- Breathing suppression, which may be more significant at altitude where oxygen levels are lower
- Unpredictable paradoxical reactions such as agitation, disinhibition or aggression
- Increased risks when combined with alcohol

Guideline and legal reasons

- Benzodiazepines are only recommended short-term for crisis in generalised anxiety disorder and are not indicated for situational anxiety or phobias.
- If anxiety is severe enough to require benzodiazepines, a patient would usually be considered unfit to fly.
- Prescribing diazepam for flying goes against NICE and BNF advice and exposes prescribers to medicolegal risk.

Travel, legal and insurance risks

- Diazepam is a controlled drug in the UK and illegal in some countries.
- Carrying it abroad may lead to confiscation or legal problems.
- Use of sedative medication may invalidate travel insurance if not declared.

Safer alternatives

Effective and safer approaches include psychological therapies such as CBT, airline fear-of-flying courses, and practical coping strategies.

Useful links and references

NHS Phobias Treatment: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/phobias/treatment/>

NHS CBT Information: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/>

British National Formulary (BNF): <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/>

Fit for Travel – Air Travel Advice: <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/air-travel>

Anxiety UK – Fear of Flying: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/anxiety-type/fear-of-flying/>

Last updated: April 2026