

BENZODIAZEPINES

BENZODIAZEPINES + PREGNANCY

Benzodiazepines are a class of medications prescribed for sleep problems, anxiety, and seizures. Benzodiazepines work in a similar way to alcohol and affect the same brain receptors. Benzodiazepine use might increase the risk of having a baby with **cleft lip** or **palate** slightly, but there is no link to other birth defects.^{6,7,8}

Some studies have found an increased risk of **lower birth weight**, and other studies did not.

Possible lower birth weights among people who take these medications could be related to sleep deprivation, and not the drugs.

Because people use benzodiazepines for sleep problems it's difficult to know for sure.⁹


Newborns who are given benzodiazepines in the NICU have shown withdrawal signs.

Long term outcomes are thought to be similar to other children in the same peer group.

Benzodiazepines are a class of medications prescribed for sleep, anxiety, and seizures. Some common ones are: lorazepam (Ativan®), diazepam (Valium®), alprazolam (Xanax®), clonazepam (Klonopin®).

BENZODIAZEPINES + LACTATION

Because they have side effects - including tolerance and dependence - is important to take **as low a dose of benzodiazepine as possible** to get the benefits you need if you're breast/chestfeeding. Talk to your provider about the dose that is right for you.

Not all benzodiazepines are the same. Some are safer than others while breastfeeding. For example, lorazepam is safer than diazepam. [See LactMed.](#) 

In small studies, **some breastfed babies have low muscle tone, sedation, or difficulties breathing** and feeding that resolved.¹⁰ A problem with small studies is that because they include fewer people, their findings are difficult to generalize.



What treatment options are available for dependence on benzodiazepines?

There are no FDA-approved medications that can help with benzodiazepine dependence. However, doctors can prescribe medications that can ease uncomfortable symptoms.

If you are using benzodiazepines to help with anxiety, depression, or insomnia **there may be medications that are safer to use while pregnant or lactating.** Seek medical advice.

Stopping use without help can be dangerous. Some people have withdrawal symptoms like seizures.¹¹ So it's important to **decrease the dose gradually (taper off) with the help of a healthcare provider.**

