

BENZODIAZEPINES

BENZODIAZEPINES + PREGNANCY

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

Some studies 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 many people take benzodiazepines for sleep problems.⁹ Newborns exposed during pregnancy have shown **withdrawal signs** after they are born.¹⁰

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, it 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 in regard to their safety and breastfeeding. For example, lorazepam is safer than diazepam, for example. [See LactMed.](#) 

In small studies, **some breastfed babies have low muscle tone, sedation, or difficulties breathing** and feeding that resolved¹¹. A problem with small studies is that because they include fewer people, their findings are limited.



What treatment options are available for dependence on benzodiazepines?

There are no medications that can help with benzodiazepine dependence.

If you are using them 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 because of withdrawal symptoms like seizures. So it's important to **decrease the dose gradually (taper off) with the help of a healthcare provider.** ¹²

