



Women in Usdaw

Talking about ...



Usdaw

*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*

www.usdaw.org.uk

Women and tranquillisers and sleeping pills

The use of tranquillisers and sleeping pills is a real issue for women.

- Twice as many women as men are prescribed these drugs.
- It is estimated that one in five women are prescribed these drugs at some point in each year.
- They are used more by women who do not have a steady job outside the home.

Why is there concern about the use of these drugs?

These drugs are in widespread everyday use, often dispensed through repeat prescriptions.

But doctors and patients are becoming increasingly concerned about them for three main reasons:

- It is doubtful whether they are effective for periods beyond four months.
- Their side effects can be unpleasant and distressing.
- There is a strong risk that people who use them will become dependent.

What drugs are w

The drugs known as the benzodiazepines are among the most commonly prescribed drugs in the World. Those in common use are listed below by medical use. Some are prescribed as tranquillisers, some as sleeping pills and some as tranquillisers as well as sleeping pills.

Drugs prescribed as tranquillisers

<i>Medical Name</i>	<i>Brand Name</i>
Chlordiazepoxide	Libritas, Librium, Tropium
Clobazam	Frisium
Clorazepate	Tranxene
Diazepam	Alupram, Atensine, Evacalm, Sedapam, Solis, Tensium, Valium, Valrelease
Ketazolam	Anxon
Lorazepam	Ativan
Medazepam	Nobrium
Oxazepam	Serax, Serenid D, Serenid Forte

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Drugs prescribed as sleeping pills

<i>Medical Name</i>	<i>Brand Name</i>
Flunitrazepam	Rohypnol
Flurazepam	Dalmane
Lormetazepam	Noctamid
Nitrazepam	Mogadon, Nitrados, Remnos, Somnite, Surem
Temazepam	Euhypnos, Normison
Trazolam	Halcion

How do these drugs affect people?

Many serious side effects are reported. They include:

- Feeling that you couldn't care less about anything.
- Weakness.
- Dry mouth.
- Lack of co-ordination.
- Low blood pressure.
- Fever.
- Being unable to think straight.
- Sleepiness.
- Giddiness.
- Hangover.
- Stuttering.
- Lack of concentration.

Giving up

If you've been taking these drugs for a long time and want to give them up, don't do it on your own. Discuss it carefully with your doctor; get support from family and friends.

How to get help

There is a National Drugs Helpline which can offer advice (see below). They may also know of local groups where you can get practical help and support. One of these groups recently echoed the views of many doctors, patients and community workers:

*“... The people who desperately need help are ... men and women, who are often suffering an appalling and prolonged illness because they have taken medication supplied on prescription by their GP. They are **not** abusers of drugs, they are **not** misusers. The vast majority have carefully followed the instructions of the doctor and taken no more than therapeutic doses of medication.”*

National Drugs Helpline

Offers free, confidential advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Any calls made to the Helpline do not appear on an itemised telephone bill – Tel: 0800 776600.

Local Well-Woman Clinics may also be able to offer advice.

For further information

The Tranquilliser Trap – Joy Melville

Coming off Tranquillisers – Shirley Trickett

Bottling It Up – Valerie Curran & Susan Golombok

Don't forget the advice and support you can get from the union in dealing with any issues that affect you.

To find out more about the work of Women in Usdaw or about joining Usdaw contact:

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