

CONCURRENT USE OF OPIOIDS AND BENZODIAZEPINES (BZDs)

In August 2016, a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review found that the growing COMBINED use of opioid medicines with BZDs or other drugs that depress the central nervous system (CNS) has resulted in serious side effects, including slowed or difficult breathing and deaths. Opioids are used to treat pain and cough; BZDs are used to treat anxiety, insomnia, and seizures.

FACTS ABOUT OPIOIDS AND BZDs

- Opioids are powerful prescription medicines that can help manage pain when other treatments and medicines cannot be taken or are not able to provide enough pain relief.
- Common side effects of opioids include drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, constipation, and slowed or difficult breathing. Opioids also carry serious risks, including misuse and abuse, addiction, overdose, and death.
- BZDs are a class of medicines that are widely used to treat conditions including anxiety, insomnia, and seizures
- Common side effects of BZDs include drowsiness, dizziness, weakness, and physical dependence.
- Both opioids and BZDs depress the central nervous system (CNS).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

- Combining opioid pain medicines with medicines called BZDs, which are used for anxiety, insomnia, and seizures, can result in extreme sleepiness, slowed or difficult breathing, coma, or death. These serious side effects result because both opioids and BZDs impact (depress) the central nervous system (CNS). The CNS controls most of the functions of the brain and body.
- These serious side effects can also occur when opioids are combined with other medicines that depress the CNS or alcohol.
- Do not drink alcohol with any of these medicines. Alcohol also depresses the CNS and can increase the risk for these serious and life-threatening side effects.
- Given the serious side effects that may occur, if you are already taking both opioids and BZDs or other medicines that depress the CNS, **talk to your health care professional to see if continued combined use is needed.**
- Do not take opioid pain medicines with BZDs or other medicines that depress the CNS without discussing it with your health care professional. Do not take opioid cough medicines with BZDs or other medicines that depress the CNS.
- Always inform all your health care professionals about all the medicines you are taking, including prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. It is helpful to keep a list of all your current medicines in your wallet or another location where it is easily retrieved.
- If you are taking an opioid pain or cough medicine or a benzodiazepine and don't know if you are also receiving other medicines that may interact, contact your pharmacist or other health care professional.
- If you are taking both an opioid pain medicine and a benzodiazepine or other medicine that depresses the CNS, avoid driving or operating heavy machinery until you know how the medicines affect you.
- Opioids are powerful medicines that can help manage pain when other treatments and medicines are not able to provide enough pain relief. However, even when used properly, opioids also carry serious risks, and they can be misused and abused, causing addiction, overdose, and death. BZDs also carry the risk of dependence.
- It is important to lock up opioids and BZDs and to dispose of them properly to keep them from being taken accidentally by children or falling into the wrong hands.

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ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 786-460-3427 o 833-342-7463(TTY: 711).

- Talk to your health care professional if you have any questions or concerns about opioids, BZDs, or other medicines you are taking.
- Read the patient Medication Guide or patient information leaflet that comes with your filled prescription(s).

LIST OF COMMONLY PRESCRIBED OPIOID MEDICINES

LABEL NAME
TRAMADOL
OXYCODONE-ACETAMINOPHEN
OXYCODONE-ACETAMINOPHEN
ACETAMINOPHEN-CODEINE
OXYCODONE
HYDROCODONE-ACETAMINOPHEN
HYDROMORPHONE
FENTANYL
MORPHINE
HYDROCODONE-IBUPROFEN
MORPHINE

**This is not a comprehensive list.*

LIST OF COMMONLY PRESCRIBED BENZODIAZEPINE MEDICINES

LABEL NAME
ALPRAZOLAM
CHLORDIAZEPOXIDE
CLONAZEPAM
CLORAZEPATE
DIAZEPAM
ESTAZOLAM
FLURAZEPAM
LORAZEPAM
OXAZEPAM
TEMAZEPAM
TRIAZOLAM

**This is not a comprehensive list.*

If you are taking both opioids and BZDs together, consult your health care provider to see if continued combined use is needed. For more information, please see the FDA Drug Safety Communication at <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-drug-safety-communication-fda-warns-about-serious-risks-and-death-when-combining-opioid-pain-or>

References:

FDA Drug Safety Communication: FDA warns about serious risks and death when combining opioid pain or cough medicines with BZDs; requires its strongest warning. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-drug-safety-communication-fda-warns-about-serious-risks-and-death-when-combining-opioid-pain-or>. Accessed December 11, 2020.

FDA Requires New Warnings on Combined Opioid, Benzodiazepine Use.

<https://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20160907opioid-benzos.html>. Accessed December 11, 2020.