



## FDA warns about serious risks and death when combining opioid pain or cough medicines with benzodiazepines; requires its strongest warning

A U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review has found that the growing combined use of opioid medicines with benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, Ativan, Klonopin, etc.) 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; benzodiazepines are used to treat anxiety, insomnia, and seizures. In an effort to decrease the use of opioids and benzodiazepines, or opioids and other CNS depressants, together, the FDA is adding **Boxed Warnings**, their strongest warnings, to the drug labeling of prescription opioid pain and prescription opioid cough medicines, and benzodiazepines.

Per the FDA: **“Health care professionals** should limit prescribing opioid pain medicines with benzodiazepines or other CNS depressants only to patients for whom alternative treatment options are inadequate. If these medicines are prescribed together, limit the dosages and duration of each drug to the minimum possible while achieving the desired clinical effect. Warn patients and caregivers about the risks of slowed or difficult breathing and/or sedation, and the associated signs and symptoms. Avoid prescribing prescription opioid cough medicines for patients taking benzodiazepines or other CNS depressants, **including alcohol.**”

Our recommendations to our patients are that they try to seek alternative medications or methods to replace their benzodiazepine drugs. Please speak with your prescribing physician to address this issue. We reserve the right as a practice to lower or stop opiate pain medications and seek alternative methods to manage your pain.

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