



Blues, Yellows, Whites, Vallies, Scoobies, Diazepam, Etizolam, Benzos

steps to reduce harm

Authors John Campbell
& Jo Mcmanus

STREET BENZOS

Harm Reduction (HR)

'Street Benzos' or 'Street Valium' are terms given to a range of benzodiazepines which are sold at street level.

Providing harm reduction information for illicit benzodiazepines has always been difficult, particularly when they are taken in combination with other drugs.

The current situation, where the ingredients and strength of the tablets often change, has made providing harm reduction information more challenging. Street benzos have also become very cheap to buy in bulk, meaning people can consume large amounts at a time or re-dose frequently.

However, there are steps people can take to make their use less risky.

This booklet aims to discuss a range of steps that can be taken to reduce harm and possible overdose.

Overdose -

Street benzos are killing more people in your area than ever before. Over the past few years, Greater Glasgow and Clyde has seen a 300% increase where these drugs contributed to the death of individuals. Most of these deaths happened when benzos were taken with other depressant/downers drugs such as alcohol, heroin or methadone. We also know that some prescribed drugs such as pregabalin and gabapentin increase the risk of death too. Essentially, it's the combination of any of these depressant drugs which slow breathing to a life threatening level.

HR – do not use combinations of depressant/downer drugs

Naloxone -

If you are also using heroin or methadone, have naloxone close by at all times. Naloxone won't do much for the benzos in your system but by removing heroin or methadone, it might be enough to keep you alive.

HR – if taking heroin or methadone always have naloxone close by.

Dose and Risk -

The amount of tablets taken increases the risk. People often report consuming handfuls of tablets at a time. These drugs also affect short term memory so people can't remember their last dose. If people carry less on them at any given time this may help reduce the risk of unintentional re-dosing. Remember the dose and ingredients can vary from tablet to tablet.

HR – reduce the amount of tablets you are taking, try carrying less and start with a low dose.

Contents -

The content of street benzos varies. You can't tell by weight, size or colour what is in the tablet. In recent years many street benzos have been sold as valium (diazepam), however, testing has shown us that they contained no valium (diazepam) at all. What they did contain was Phenazepam, Diclazepam and more recently Etizolam. All these drugs can differ in strength and how long they remain in the body.

HR – don't assume all tablets are the same. If you can take a test dose do so.



Other risks -

Memory loss and unpredictable behaviour is common when consuming large quantities of street benzos. People report losing days or coming round in a police cell only to be charged with an offence they do not remember committing. Consuming alcohol with benzos may make these blackouts worse. Do not use alcohol to help with jerking, seizures or withdrawals from benzos. Alcohol is a depressant and will increase the risk of overdose.

HR – If you are blacking out take less and avoid alcohol.

Stopping use -

Tolerance and dependence to benzos develops very quickly. The more benzos you take, and the more often you take them, the greater the risk and the more dependant you will become. This can make stopping suddenly dangerous. You may need help to stop using safely. However, you can always cut down and seek help.

HR – If you have been taking large amounts most days then don't stop suddenly - but you can take less.

Harm Reduction Steps

1. Do not use combinations of depressant/downer drugs.
2. If taking heroin or methadone always have naloxone close by.
3. Reduce the amount of tablets you are taking, try carrying less and start with a low dose.
4. Don't assume all tablets are the same. If you can take a test dose then do so.
5. If you are blacking out take less tablets and avoid alcohol.
6. If you have been taking large amounts most days then don't stop suddenly - but you can take less.

GD0047_E29_01

