

# Lorazepam

## Respiratory Medicine - For the relief of anxiety related breathlessness

### Information for patients

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This leaflet is for patients with respiratory conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and pulmonary fibrosis who experience anxiety related to their breathlessness.

### What is lorazepam?

Lorazepam belongs to a group of medicines called benzodiazepines which can be used for the treatment of anxiety. It has also been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety related breathlessness. It can be used either short term or long term.

### How to take lorazepam

This medicine should be taken as prescribed for you, following the information on the medicine label.

Lorazepam tablets can be swallowed whole with water or placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve (sublingual). If taking sublingually, drink water before to help the tablet dissolve better. This way of taking lorazepam helps it to act more quickly.

The usual dose for treating anxiety related breathlessness is 0.5mg (usually half of a 1mg tablet) as required for your symptoms. The effects of lorazepam usually last around 8 hours. Your prescriber will advise you on how often it can be taken in a day.

If you cannot half the tablet, tablet cutters are available to buy from community pharmacies or online.

### What are the most common side effects?

As with all medicines, there is a potential risk of side effects. However not everyone will experience them.

The most common side effect of lorazepam is drowsiness. If you are on other medicines which also cause drowsiness then you should discuss this with your GP or respiratory team before starting lorazepam. This side effect is most likely to occur at the beginning of treatment or after a dose increase.

Other side effects may include muscle weakness, problems with coordination or controlling your movements, light headedness, blurred vision and nausea. This can increase your risk of falls.

If you experience any side effects when you take lorazepam, please let your GP or your respiratory team know.

### Can I get addicted to lorazepam?

The doses used for anxiety related breathlessness are low and unlikely to become addictive. Please speak to your GP or respiratory team if you have any concerns.

## Driving

You can drive but we recommend you don't drive when you first start taking lorazepam, until it is clear how drowsy it will make you feel. Do not drive any vehicle, operate machinery or ride a bike if you feel drowsy, have blurred vision or are unable to concentrate.

## Alcohol

Drinking alcohol when taking lorazepam may increase drowsiness. You should only drink alcohol in moderation whilst taking lorazepam. It is important to not exceed the recommended limits.

## Further information

If you have any other questions about using lorazepam for breathlessness, please do not hesitate to contact your GP or respiratory team.

See below for more information or call **NHS 24 on 111** for non emergency medical advice.

## Useful resources

### NHS Inform website

Scottish health information you can trust

<https://www.nhsinform.scot>

Shortness of breath

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/lungs-and-airways/shortness-of-breath>

### Asthma + Lung, UK

<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk>

How can I manage my breathlessness?

<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/symptoms-tests-treatments/symptoms/breathlessness/how-can-i-manage-my-breathlessness>

## Contact details

Respiratory team	Telephone number