

Co-prescribing Opioids and Benzodiazepines

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PHYSICIANS



Co-prescribing benzodiazepines with opioids increases the risk of life-threatening overdose.

Recommendations:

- Consider an alternative approach if possible, non-pharmacologic and non-opioid therapies are preferred.
- Prescribe the lowest possible effective dose.
- Check the PDMP for patient history.
- Co-prescribe naloxone.
- Single prescriber management is preferred.

Did you know?

- A cohort study in North Carolina found that the overdose death rate among patients receiving opioids and benzodiazepines was 10 times higher than among those only receiving opioids.
- In 2020, 16% of overdose deaths involving opioids also involved benzodiazepines.
- Research shows that people who use opioids and benzodiazepines in combination are at increased risk of visiting the emergency department and dying of drug overdose.
- Patients prescribed benzodiazepines and opioids by different providers are 20% more likely to overdose.



References:

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2. Dowell D, Haegerich TM, Chou R. CDC guideline for prescribing opioids for chronic pain—United States, 2016. *JAMA.* 2016;315(15):1624-1645. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.1464
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2021-116/pdfs/2021-116.pdf>
4. Association Between Receipt of Overlapping Opioid and Benzodiazepine Prescriptions From Multiple Prescribers and Overdose Risk - PMC (nih.gov)