Benzodiazepines are depressants or “downers”. They are used to treat anxiety, muscle spasms, insomnia and seizures. The use of these medications should be under the direct supervision of a physician. They are also known as Xanax (aka alprazolam, bars, footballs), Klonopin (aka clonazepam, klonies), Valium (aka diazepam, blues), Ativan (lorazepam), Versed (midazolam).

So how does it work?
The benzodiazepines work by increasing gammaaminobutyric acid (GABA), a chemical in the brain that decreases brain activity. By decreasing the activity in the brain, these medications produce a drowsy or calming effect.

What happens when Benzodiazepines are mixed with....

Alcohol?
Using these medications with alcohol increases the risk of dangerous reactions. When the benzodiazepines are mixed with alcohol, they can slow down the heart and breathing rate possibly leading to death.

Marijuana?
Mixing benzodiazepines and marijuana increases the risk of dangerous reactions. When mixed with marijuana, the sedative effects of benzodiazepines are increased.

What if you take Benzodiazepines while you are pregnant?
Safety during pregnancy has not been established, so these medications are not recommended for use during pregnancy. Benzodiazepines may be harmful to the fetus, especially during the first trimester.

Is there a chance this substance could contain contaminants if it is obtained “on the street”? If so, what are the effects of these contaminants?
If these medications are bought “on the street” they have the potential to contain contaminants or not be the medication they are sold as. If the substance is contaminated, the risk to the consumer is dependent on the contaminant or substance. Contaminants vary greatly and there is no specific contaminant associated with these agents.

Short term effects of taking Benzodiazepines

Judgment
• Use of these medications may result in drowsiness, dizziness and confusion which may impair judgment.
• These effects may become more noticeable with increased doses.
• Use of this agent may result in drug dependence and/ or addiction.

Memory
• Use of these medications may cause impaired memory, poor concentration and confusion.

Health
• Use of these medications may cause blurred vision, weakness, slurred speech, lack of coordination, difficulty breathing or coma.
• Use of these agents may result in depression or suicidal thoughts.
• These medications have been used as “date rape” drugs because they can cause impaired functioning and memory.
• Use of this agent may result in drug dependence and/ or addiction.

Long term effects of taking Benzodiazepines

Judgment
• Use of these medications may cause confusion and drowsiness which may impair judgment.
• These effects may be more obvious at higher doses.

Memory
• Use of these medications may cause amnesia, poor concentration and confusion.

Health
• Long term use of benzodiazepines may result in tolerance, which means that the body needs higher doses to achieve the same initial effects.
• These medications work by slowing the brain’s activity, so stopping their use abruptly causes the brain’s activity to rebound, or race out of control. This may result in seizures or other dangerous consequences.
• Use of this agent may result in drug dependence and/ or addiction.

For more information contact the Student Health Center at 348.3878
References