

View this article online at: patient.info/medicine/diazepam-a-benzodiazepine-diazemuls-rectubes-stesolid

Diazepam – a benzodiazepine (Diazemuls, RecTubes, Stesolid)

Diazepam has a calming effect. It is prescribed for several different conditions.

Your course of treatment will be as short as possible. This can range from one single dose, to up to a maximum of four weeks of treatment.

Diazepam is likely to affect your reactions and ability to drive. These effects can last into the following day. It is an offence to drive while your reactions are impaired.

About diazepam

Type of medicine	A benzodiazepine
Used for	Muscle spasms; convulsions caused by epilepsy or fever; anxiety; agitation or insomnia associated with anxiety; panic attacks; as a pre-med before surgery or medical procedures; alongside other treatments in alcohol withdrawal
Also called	Diazemuls® (injection); RecTubes®, Stesolid® (rectal tubes)
Available as	Tablets, oral liquid medicine, rectal tubes (enemas) and injection

Diazepam works by affecting the way certain substances in your brain (called neurotransmitters) pass messages to your brain cells. It has a calming effect on various functions of your brain.

The calming effect is helpful in a variety of conditions which can be caused by anxiety, such as [panic attacks](#), agitation and difficulties sleeping. The calming effect is also used to relax and/or sedate people who are having certain medical investigations or treatments. It is given as a pre-med, particularly during procedures that can cause anxiety or discomfort.

The calming action also helps to relax muscles. Diazepam is used to treat muscle spasm, and also to treat fits caused by [epilepsy](#) or [fever](#). Rectal diazepam tubes (enemas) are often prescribed for the treatment of fits as they are useful where a quick effect is needed and where swallowing tablets or medicine is not practicable.

Diazepam can also be prescribed to help reduce withdrawal effects in people who are alcohol-dependent and who want to [stop drinking](#).

However, diazepam is usually prescribed only for very short periods of not more than 1–3 weeks. If you take it for longer, the medicine may lose its effect (you may become tolerant to the effect), and if you stop it you may develop withdrawal symptoms. You may need to keep taking the medicine to avoid the withdrawal symptoms. This is known as drug dependence.

In addition, you may become addicted to diazepam. Addiction is different from dependence. You have an overwhelming craving for a drug, so that you feel compelled to take it even though it is harming you physically or affecting your life and relationships.

Before taking diazepam

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine can only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking diazepam it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you have any breathing problems.
- If you have any problems with the way your liver works, or if you have any problems with the way your kidneys work.
- If you have a mental health problem. This includes conditions such as psychosis, depression, obsessive conditions, phobias and personality disorders.
- If you have ever had a drug or alcohol addiction.
- If you have a condition causing severe muscle weakness called myasthenia gravis.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.
- If you are taking or using any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.

How to take diazepam

- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about diazepam, and will also provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you could experience from taking it.
- Take diazepam exactly as your doctor tells you to - the dose will be individualised to suit your needs. The directions for taking it will be printed on the label of the pack to remind you about what the doctor said to you. You could be asked to take just one single dose (if it is before a medical procedure, for example), or to take regular doses for a short while. If you are to take diazepam regularly, you could be asked to take one, two, or three doses a day. The course of treatment prescribed will be as short as possible. If you have any questions about how to take your diazepam, please ask your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.
- If you have been prescribed tablets to take, swallow the tablet with a drink of water. You can take diazepam either before or after food.
- If you (or your child) have been prescribed diazepam rectal tubes, carefully read the instructions on the label as soon as you collect your supply to make sure you know how to use them when needed.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Try to keep any appointments with your doctor. This is so your doctor can check on your progress.
- Diazepam is likely to affect your reactions and ability to drive. It is an offence to drive while your reactions are impaired. Do not drive until you know how you react, especially when you first start treatment. Please also be aware that the effects of diazepam can last into the following day. Even if your driving ability is not impaired, should you drive, you are advised to carry with you some evidence that the medicine has been prescribed for you - a repeat prescription form or a patient information leaflet from the pack is generally considered suitable.
- Do not drink alcohol while you are on diazepam. It will increase the risk of sedative side-effects.

- If you are due to have an operation or any dental treatment, please tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking diazepam. This is because diazepam increases the effects of some anaesthetics.
- Your doctor could recommend that you reduce your dose of diazepam gradually when it is time to stop taking it. This is to reduce the risk of you experiencing withdrawal effects. Follow carefully any instructions your doctor gives to you.

Can diazepam cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains the most common ones associated with diazepam. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Common diazepam side-effects	What can I do if I experience this?
Feeling sleepy, weak, or light-headed (these can continue into the following day)	Do not drive and do not use tools or machines. Do not drink alcohol
Forgetfulness, feeling confused or unsteady	If these become troublesome, speak with your doctor
Feeling (or being) aggressive	This can happen in some people - let your doctor know about it as soon as possible

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to the medicine, please speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

How to store diazepam

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.

- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.
-

Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital at once. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

If you buy any medicines check with a pharmacist that they are safe to take with your other medicines.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Diazepam tablets 2 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg](#); Accord-UK Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated August 2020.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Stesolid® Rectal Tubes 5 mg, 10 mg](#); Accord-UK Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated June 2020.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 88th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

Disclaimer: This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

Last updated by: Michael Stewart, MRPharms 14/03/2022	
Peer reviewed by: Sid Dajani 14/03/2022	Next review date: 13/03/2025

View this article online at: patient.info/medicine/diazepam-a-benzodiazepine-diazemuls-rectubes-stesolid

Discuss Diazepam - a benzodiazepine (Diazemuls, RecTubes, Stesolid) and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).



To find out more visit www.patientaccess.com
or download the app



Follow us

