**Sedative Hypnotics**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) define **sedative-hypnotics** as a class of drug used to induce and/or maintain sleep [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov). Sedative-hypnotics depress or slow down the body’s functions. They belong to the group of medicines called central nervous system (CNS) depressants.

The **types of Sedative-Hypnotic** drugs are barbiturates, benzodiazepines, and others that do not fit those two groups are selected other sedative-hypnotics. This fact sheet will deal mainly with barbiturates and benzodiazepines.

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| **Barbiturates**  Butisol sodium (butabarbital)  Carbrital (pentabobarbital and carbromal)  Seconal (secobarbital sodium)  Amytal (amobarbital)  Mebaral (mephobarbital)  Nembutal (pentobarbital)  Luminol (phenobarbital) | **Benzodiazepines**  Delmane (flurazepam hydrochloride)  Doral (quazepam)  Halcion (triazolam)  Prosom (estazolam)  Restoril (temazepam)  Xanax (alprazolam)  Librium (chlordiazepoxide)  Klonopin (clonazepam)  Tranxene (clorazepate)  Valium (diazepam)  Ativan (lorazepam)  Versed (midazolam)  Serax (oxazepam) | **Other Sedative-Hypnotics**  Ambien (zolpidem tartrate)  Lunesta (eszopictone)  Rozerem (ramelteon)  Sonata (zaleplon)  Buspar (buspirone)  Somnote (chloral hydrate)  Sonata (zaleplon) |

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Sedative-hypnotics can help with anxiety, nervousness, and seizures, or decrease memories of treatments, and to help with coping during withdrawal of another substance like alcohol and cocaine [www.drugs.com](http://www.drugs.com). Sedative-hypnotic drugs may be used to relieve symptoms of sleep problems for short term use. Benzodiazepines act on the brain and nerves (central nervous system) to produce a calming effect. It works by enhancing the effects of a certain natural chemical in the body (GABA) [http://www.rxlist.com](http://www.rxlist.com/xanax-drug.htm#).

**Street names for sedative-hypnotics include:**

***Barbiturates***—barbs, downers, blues and reds-*Amytal and Seconal* capsules, Idiot pills, sleepers, stumblers; *amobarbital*-blue heavens, blue velvet, blue devils; *pentobarbital*-nembies, yellow jackets, abbots, Mexican yellows;

***Benzodiazepines***—tranks, downers, *Valium*-“V”s; *Xanax*- “Z bars”, football, blue, zani, zanibars, peaches; *Seconal*- M&M, pinks, pink ladies, red birds, red bullets, F-40’s, seccy, seggy; *phenobarbital*- purple hearts, goof balls

<http://www.drugs.indiana.edu>**,** <http://www.emedicinehealth.com>

**Physiological effects** from sedative hypnotic abuse include addiction because of tolerance to the drugs. NAMI reports a sling-shot affect post treatment of anxiety can occur [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org). Birth defects and withdrawal symptoms for babies through placenta and breast milk with drug usage during pregnancy. Long term use of benzodiazepine is associated with increased depression and suicidal thoughts. Older individuals and those in poor physical health need to have dosage monitored because they metabolize the drug slower, and can build up to a toxic level [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org). Sometimes sleep walking, eating, sex, and other activity can happen with no awareness while technically still asleep. The FDA made several of the sedative hypnotic drugs used to help sleep require an alert on their packaging <http://www.fda.gov>.

**Withdrawal** effects vary with the type, how long it was used, and the amount of sedative-hypnotic was being used, and the individual. Symptoms can start within a few hours and may take time because dosage must be decreased over time. Withdrawal **symptoms** can be severe if benzodiazepines have been taken a long time or at a large dose. One can feel nauseated, have increased sweating and heartbeat, hallucinations, shaky hands, problems with sleep, repetitive behaviors, nervousness, or have seizures, and sometimes death <http://www.emedicinehealth.com>. Barbiturate withdrawal can have very serious symptoms, including death, if done suddenly [www.well.com](http://www.well.com).

**The effects of sedative-hypnotic drug abuse** for barbiturates are similar to alcohol. Overdoses can cause hostile or aggressive behavior. It can be from calming muscles to slurred speech, staggering gait, poor judgment, and slow reflexes, and unconsciousness. Overdoses because of confusion, or the need for larger doses for the effect wanted, can cause death. Overdoses and death can occur if mixed with other drugs and/or alcohol.

**Resources**

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