

Tranquilizers and Sleeping Pills

What Are Tranquilizers and Sleeping Pills?

These drugs belong to a larger group of substances known as the **sedative-hypnotics**, which **slow down** or "**sedate**" the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord). This **affects thinking, feeling, and body movement and function**. **Alcohol is also a sedative**. Diazepam (**Valium**) is one example of a **tranquilizer**.

In large doses, tranquilizers can induce **sleep or unconsciousness**, just like sleeping pills can. In normal doses, tranquilizers may make one **feel calm**, and they are prescribed to treat anxiety. Some tranquilizers and sleeping pills have been linked to "**date rape**." Criminals have dropped these drugs into people's drinks so that they will not resist against being raped or assaulted. Victims get **drowsy, dizzy, and confused**. They may even **black out**. To avoid becoming a victim, stay aware of your environment and **never leave your drink unattended**.

If you need to take tranquilizers or sleeping pills, use them for a **short time only**. In the long term, there are better ways to deal with stress and sleeplessness (exercise, biofeedback, relaxation techniques and counseling).

Short Term Effects

The short term effects of tranquilizers and sleeping pills include **relaxation, drowsiness, reduced tension and feelings of well-being**. It is **dangerous to drive a vehicle while using these drugs**. **Never combine these drugs with alcohol**. The depressant effects of alcohol multiply the depressant effects of the tranquilizers or sleeping pills, and you may have **trouble breathing, and may go into a coma or die**.

Long Term Effects

With long term use, users may have **problems with memory and judgment**. They can become **confused and disoriented**, and their **muscles may get weak**. If a pregnant woman takes sleeping pills and tranquilizers, they **will enter the blood of the developing fetus**. There is a higher risk that the fetus will have **birth defects such as a cleft palate**. Always check with a doctor before taking drugs during pregnancy.

Tranquilizers, Sleeping Pills and Addiction

Tolerance is the body adapting to the presence of a drug. When tolerance to a drug increases, more of the drug is necessary to achieve the same effects. Users of tranquilizers and sleeping pills soon **develop tolerance** to the calming effects of these drugs. By contrast, there is usually no tolerance to the harmful effects: **more drug produces more harm**. When tolerance builds, it is dangerous to continue using the drug. If you have developed tolerance to tranquilizers or sleeping pills, talk to your doctor before you quit taking the drugs. Withdrawal symptoms may include **nausea, anxiety, increased heart rate, abdominal cramps, tremors or even seizures**.