

# Be Familiar With Meds for Anxiety

**Meds for generalized anxiety disorder are common on home med lists...**since about 1 in 13 US adults will be diagnosed in their lifetime.

It's more than occasional anxiety. It's hard-to-control worry with related symptoms (insomnia, etc) that persist most days for months.

Be prepared to manage home anxiety meds during a hospital admission.

**SSRIs or SNRIs.** Expect one of these to be used first-line, based on overall evidence for generalized anxiety disorder. Plus they're preferred for common comorbidities, such as depression.

Clarify the indication when these are on a home med list.

For anxiety, expect to see escitalopram or sertraline...or duloxetine or venlafaxine...used most commonly. Limited data suggest these provide a better balance of efficacy and tolerability.

Continue SSRIs or SNRIs during an admission if able. Abruptly stopping can lead to withdrawal...flu-like symptoms, hyperarousal, etc.

**Buspirone.** Think of this as second-line if an SSRI or SNRI isn't tolerated...or as an add-on if they aren't enough.

You can hold buspirone on admission if needed...stopping it doesn't cause withdrawal. But if it's continued, ensure doses are bid or tid...and not prn.

**Benzos.** Anticipate these to be saved for select cases, such as severe anxiety disorders.

Expect to see longer-acting benzos, such as clonazepam, scheduled for generalized anxiety disorder. Shorter-acting benzos, such as alprazolam, can cause rebound anxiety or withdrawal.

In patients taking benzos, try to use non-opioid analgesics...since combining opioids and benzos increases risk for opioid-induced respiratory depression.

Get our updated chart, Pharmacotherapy of Anxiety, for more on other med options, such as pregabalin and hydroxyzine.

## Key References:

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- DeGeorge KC, Grover M, Streeter GS. Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Panic Disorder in Adults. Am Fam Physician. 2022 Aug;106(2):157-164.

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