



University
Hospitals Sussex
NHS Foundation Trust

Lorazepam for head and neck radiotherapy

Oncology

Patient information

What is this information about?

This information is about a drug called lorazepam. It describes what it does, and what you need to know before you take it.

Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this information because you may be given a tight mask to wear to keep you still during your head and neck radiotherapy. This can make some people feel anxious or claustrophobic.

Lorazepam is a drug that can help you feel calmer and more relaxed during treatment.

There are some side effects to lorazepam, and it may be addictive if it is used often. Reading this information will help you to understand the risks and benefits of using lorazepam, so you can make an informed choice.

Keep this information with you so you can refer to it when you talk about lorazepam with the team looking after you.

What does lorazepam do?

- Helps reduce anxiety and tension.
- Starts working in 20 to 30 minutes.
- Lasts several hours.
- Allows you to stay awake and talk, if you want to.

What do I need to know before I take lorazepam?

- Take lorazepam only if your team has prescribed it.
- Do not drive after taking it. Arrange a lift to and from the hospital.

- Avoid alcohol for 24 hours before and after.
- Tell your team if you take other sedatives or strong pain medicines.
- Let them know if you have breathing problems or sleep apnoea.

What do I need to know after I take lorazepam?

- Do not drive, cycle, or use machinery for 24 hours.
- Avoid important decisions.
- Rest at home.
- Have someone stay with you after your first dose if possible.

Is lorazepam addictive?

Lorazepam can be addictive if used often. In radiotherapy, it is usually taken only occasionally, so the risk is low.

Your team will give you the lowest dose for the shortest time. If you feel you are starting to rely on it, tell your team.

You will be reviewed by your treating team weekly during treatment. They will assess how much lorazepam you need, or if you need other support too.

What can I expect when I have the mask put on?

The mask will be placed over your face and gently fixed in place. Lorazepam can help make this feel easier. You can breathe normally.

The team will leave the room but can see and hear you. You can signal if you need to stop.

Are there any possible side effects to lorazepam?

- Feeling sleepy or slow.
- Lightheadedness.
- Poor memory for a short time.
- Unsteadiness.

If anything feels severe or unusual, contact your care team.

What symptoms should I look out for that mean I need help?

Call 111 or attend your nearest Accident & Emergency if you:

- Take too much by accident.
- Feel very confused, faint, or unsteady.
- Have trouble breathing.

Talk to the team looking after you if you still feel very anxious during treatment.

Who can I talk to if I need more information or advice after I have read this?

01273 696955 Ext. 67435

uhsussex.headnecksupport@nhs.net

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This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care
in Brighton and Hove and Hayward's Heath.

Ref. number: 2716
Publication date: 03/2026 Review date: 03/2029

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