



Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network

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Lorazepam (Ativan)

The medication Lorazepam (**Ativan**) is an anxiolytic. It is used to treat short-term anxiety and sleep issues. **Ativan** is prescribed for many other medical conditions including panic disorder, insomnia, seizures, muscle spasms and alcohol withdrawal. Generally these symptoms interfere with your life goals, which is why many people choose to take **Ativan**.

Although **Ativan** can be very helpful, it can cause some side effects that you should know of before accepting treatment with it. The most common include: **sedation, confusion, uncoordinated movements**; although these effects generally occur during initial treatment some remain throughout treatment and may warrant discontinuing the medication. Talk with your provider about it.

The beneficial effect of **Ativan** is usually immediate. It takes about 30 minutes to 90 minutes to start working. It can work for up to 8 hours. The usual dosage range is 1 mg three times a day, but many people take it only when they need it (PRN) or just at night.

You can experience uncomfortable symptoms if your **Ativan** is abruptly stopped. These can include anxiety, agitation, tremor, elevated blood pressure and pulse. Seizures can also occur, especially if you have been taking the medication for a long time (about 3 months). If you choose to stop your medicine you should speak with your provider. Generally decreasing the dosage over one week avoids any discomfort.

If benzodiazepines, like **Ativan**, are taken for a long time (like 3 months or more), you can develop a tolerance, meaning that you may need more medication to get the same effect. We call this condition "dependence" and it is a state we all like to avoid. Sometimes it is healthier to limit use to about 3 months (or less). Sometimes it is best to avoid taking them at all. Dependence on a medication has its dangers and you will need to discuss this issue with your provider. But it is important to know that long use of **Ativan** can lead to dependence on it.

Ativan is generally safe with other medications. As with all treatments, please let your provider know if you are taking other medications. There are no dietary restrictions with Ativan, but you should absolutely avoid alcohol when you are taking Ativan.

There are supplemental ways to improve life which include:

- exercise
- good sleep habits
- good eating habits
- yoga
- a hobby
- visiting with family or friends
- psychotherapy

If you have further questions about this medication, please ask your medical provider or your pharmacist.

Original:	08/2011	Last reviewed:	06/2012				
		Last revised:	08/2011				