

# Alprazolam

Xanax, Xanax XR, Niravam, a benzodiazepine, a fast-acting calming medicine

**Alprazolam** works fast to settle panic and severe anxiety, and it is meant for short, targeted use.

## WHAT IT TREATS

**Panic attacks, severe anxiety**

## HOW YOU TAKE IT

**By mouth, as prescribed**

## WHEN IT WORKS

**15 to 30 minutes**

## HABIT FORMING

**Yes, your body adapts**

### ⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Mixing **alprazolam** with opioids or alcohol can slow or stop your breathing. Your body comes to depend on it, so stopping suddenly can cause seizures and can be life-threatening. Only your prescriber tapers it. Store it safely; others may misuse it.

## ① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Alprazolam** is a benzodiazepine. It quiets the alarm system in your brain, which is why panic settles so quickly.
- It is used for panic attacks and short stretches of severe anxiety. Taking it as prescribed is real treatment, not a shortcut.
- It works fast and wears off in a few hours, so it handles episodes rather than steady background worry.
- It does not treat what drives the anxiety. Therapy or a daily medicine usually does that longer-term work alongside it.

## ⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it exactly as written, whether that is on a set schedule or only when panic hits. Both patterns are normal and fine.
- You can take it with or without food. A small snack first softens the queasy feeling that some people notice.
- Swallow the XR tablets whole. Crushing or chewing one releases all of it at once, which can hit far harder than intended.
- If you miss a scheduled dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is close. Do not take two to catch up.
- Store it where children, guests, and pets cannot reach it. A locked box is worth it, since one pill can badly harm a child.

## 📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Relief usually begins within **15 to 30 minutes** and peaks around an hour later. You are meant to feel the difference.
- As it wears off, anxiety can bounce back for a while. Note when that happens so your prescriber can adjust the timing.
- Over weeks of daily use, the same amount often does less. That is your body adapting, not you doing something wrong.
- Working looks like a panic attack that ends sooner and frightens you less. It is not a day with no feelings at all.

## ♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Sleepiness is the most common effect. It is strongest in the first hour or two and after any change in amount.
- Feeling slowed, clumsy, or unsteady is common. Falls are a real risk, so take stairs and dark rooms carefully.
- Memory can go patchy for things that happen while it is working. Write down anything you will need to remember later.
- Some people feel flat or foggy the next day. Mention it, because the timing or the choice of medicine can be changed.
- Dry mouth, mild nausea, or a headache can show up. Sip water and eat something small when you take a dose.
- A few people feel keyed up or irritable instead of calm. That is worth reporting rather than pushing through it.

### ⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Very slow or shallow breathing, blue lips, or being hard to wake up: call **911** right away.
- A seizure, or shaking and confusion after missed doses: call **911**. This is what a sudden stop can cause.
- New or worse thoughts of hurting yourself: call your prescriber today, or call or text **988** if you might act.
- A fall, a blackout, or driving you cannot remember doing: call your prescriber before your next dose.

## 🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Opioid pain medicine plus **alprazolam** can stop your breathing. Every prescriber and pharmacist you see must know about both.
- Alcohol does the same thing to your breathing, and it adds up fast. There is no safe amount on a day you take this.
- Do not drive until you know how it affects you, and not within several hours of a dose. Grogginess is easy to miss.
- Grapefruit juice and some antifungal and antibiotic medicines raise your levels. Ask your pharmacist before adding anything.
- If you are pregnant, nursing, or planning a pregnancy, tell your prescriber. Do not stop on your own while pregnant.

## ⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Never stop suddenly. After regular use your body adapts, and a sudden stop can cause seizures that can be life-threatening.
- Your prescriber writes the taper, in small steps over weeks or months. Doing this alone or off an internet plan is not safe.
- Coming down can bring anxiety, poor sleep, and shakiness for a while. Slowing the pace helps more than pushing through.
- Wanting off this medicine is a fine and common goal. Bring it up early so there is time to do it gently.

## ❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Is this meant only for panic attacks, or on a set daily schedule?
- Which of my other medicines could slow my breathing alongside this?
- If I want to come off this later, what would the taper look like?
- Should I keep naloxone at home if I also take an opioid?

# Where this information comes from

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. (2024). *988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline*. <https://988lifeline.org/>

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## NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.