*Letter template to patients regarding benzodiazepine reduction*

Purpose:

Given the increasing problem of prescription drug abuse, it is relevant that all general practices consider undertaking quality improvement activities in this area. For example, after performing an audit of patients prescribed benzodiazepines, practices can send out a letter outlining the harms and risks, and inviting patients to have a consultation to explore alternative ways of managing their symptoms.

For more information, please refer to the RACGPs [Prescribing drugs of dependence in general practice – Part A – Clinical Governance Framework](https://www.racgp.org.au/clinical-resources/clinical-guidelines/key-racgp-guidelines/view-all-racgp-guidelines/prescribing-drugs-of-dependence/prescribing-drugs-of-dependence-part-a).

*[Insert practice details or practice letterhead]*

*[Address]*

*[Date]*

Dear *[patient name]*,

We are currently undertaking a review of prescriptions for medications collectively known as benzodiazepines and sleeping tablets. I am writing to you because our records show that you have received a number of prescriptions for one or more of these types of medications in the past 12 months.

A growing body of evidence suggests that if these medications are used for long periods, they can have harmful side effects, including anxiety symptoms, memory and sleep problems, and they can be addictive. We do not recommend long-term use.

We are writing to ask you to consider cutting down your dose of tablets and perhaps stopping them completely at some time in the future. As each person is different, we would like to discuss this with you in person within the next 3 months.

The best way to cut down your tablets is to take them only when you feel they are absolutely necessary. It is best to cut down gradually; otherwise you may have some withdrawal side effects. You should not stop your tablets suddenly.

Once you start to reduce your dose you may start to notice that you feel a lot better and you may be able to think about stopping altogether.

Please make an appointment with your GP to discuss this further. If you have not attended to discuss this within the next 3 months, we may not be able to continue to prescribe this medicine for you. If you have already discussed this with your doctor, or have stopped your medications, this letter does not apply to you.

Yours sincerely,

[*Dr name*]

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