

# Management of benzodiazepine misuse

## – Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment Scale - benzodiazepines

**Client report:**

Do you feel irritable?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very much so
Do you feel fatigued?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Unable to function
Do you feel tense?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very much so
Do you have difficulties concentrating?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Unable to concentrate
Do you have any loss of appetite?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 No appetite unable to eat
Do you have any numbness or burning on your face, hands or feet	0 No numbness	1	2	3	4 Intense burning/ numbness
Do you feel your heart racing? (palpitation)	0 No disturbance	1	2	3	4 Constant racing
Does your head feel full or achy?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Severe headache
Do you feel muscle aches or stiffness?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Severe stiffness or pain
Do you feel anxious, nervous or jittery?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very much so
Do you feel upset?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very much so
How restful was your sleep last night?	0 Very restful	1	2	3	4 Not at all
Do you feel weak?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very much so
Do you think you	0 Very	1	2	3	4 Not at all

didn't have enough sleep last night?	much so				
Do you have any visual disturbances? (sensitivity to light, blurred vision)	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very sensitive to light, blurred vision
Are you fearful?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very much so
Have you been worrying about possible misfortunes lately?	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4 Very much so

**Clinician observations:**

Observe behaviour for restlessness and agitation	0 none, normal activity	1	2 restless	3	4 paces back and forth, unable to sit still
Observe tremor	0 No tremor	1 Not visible, can be felt in fingers	2 visible but mild	3 Moderate with arms extended	4 severe, with arms not extended
Observe for sweating – feel palms	0 no sweating visible	1 barely perceptible sweating, palms moist	2 palms and forehead moist, reports armpit sweating		

Interpretation of scores:

1–20 = mild withdrawal

21–40 = moderate withdrawal

41–60 = severe withdrawal

61–80 = very severe withdrawal

Ref: *Busto, U.E., Sykora, K. & Sellers, E.M. (1989). A clinical scale to assess benzodiazepine withdrawal. Journal of Clinical Psychopharmacology, 9 (6), 412–416.*