

BC ECHO on Substance Use Post-session Resources

Session Title: Addressing Long-term Benzodiazepine Use in Primary Care

Date: May 28, 2026

Context

This document, now available to all BC ECHO on Substance Use session registrants, compiles resources shared during the live session and contributions from our Hub Team members. It also includes additional services and resources related to substance use care that are not specific to the session.

Clinical Guidance & Practice Resources: Benzodiazepines

- **24/7 Addiction Medicine Clinician Support Line** provides telephone consultation and support to physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and other health and allied professionals in BC who are involved in addiction and substance use care and treatment. Thanks to a partnership with FNHA, this service extends beyond clinicians, offering addiction medicine guidance to **addiction support staff calling from Indigenous communities within BC**, including Indigenous urban centres. **To speak to an Addiction Medicine Specialist, call 778-945-7619.** To learn more, visit: <https://www.bccsu.ca/24-7/>.
- [Addiction Care and Treatment Online Course](#) (ACTOC) is a free, online course provided by the BCCSU and UBC CPD for healthcare providers who diagnose and treat.
- [Addiction Practice Pod](#) Podcast's season 6: Episode 5 on "[Managing benzodiazepines in primary care](#)". Available to stream on our website and streaming platforms.
- [Benzodiazepines Best Practices in Primary Care](#) (May 2025)
- *Benzodiazepines: How they Work and How to Withdraw*, also known as [The Ashton Manual](#)
- Benzodiazepine [conversion calculator](#)
- *Drowsy without Feeling Lousy: A toolkit for reducing inappropriate use of benzodiazepines and sedative-hypnotics among older adults in primary care.* <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/CWC-Toolkit-BenzoPrimaryCare-V3.pdf> (Choosing Wisely Canada, April 2023)
- *Less Sedatives for your Relatives: A toolkit for reducing inappropriate use of benzodiazepines and sedative-hypnotics among adults in hospitals.* <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/toolkit/less-sedatives-for-your-relatives/> (Choosing Wisely Canada, May 2024)
- [Clinical Bulletin: Benzodiazepine-adulterated Opioids](#) (February 2026)
- Pottie K, Thompson W, Davies S, et al. [Deprescribing benzodiazepine receptor agonists: evidence-based clinical practice guideline](#). *Can Fam Physician*. 2018;64(5):339-351.
- [Deprescribing Guidelines and Algorithms](#)
 - o [See here for](#) deprescribing Information, patient decision aids, patient pamphlets, and more
- [Lighthouse Virtual Substance Use Care Clinic | Vancouver Coastal Health](#) provides free phone appointments for people who use substances in the Vancouver Coastal Health Region. Available 7 days a week by phone at **604-806-8223** or **toll-free 1-877-842-8884**.
- [Medstopper](#) is a deprescribing resource for healthcare professionals and their patients.
- [Northern Health Virtual Substance Use Clinic](#) offers substance use support to residents of Northern Health Region. **Call 1-844-645-7811.**
 - o [Full list of mental health and substance use services](#) by community
- [Pathways BC](#)
 - o Pathways BC Enhanced Care [Pathway for Anxiety](#)
 - o Resources for patients and providers by searching for 'benzodiazepines' in the search bar and then clicking the appropriate label for 'Patient Info' or 'Clinician Tools'

- [Rapid Access to Consultative Expertise \(RACE\) line | BC and Yukon](#)
 - o Available for consult to physicians, nurse practitioners, medical residents, and midwives, Monday-Friday from **8:00am to 5:00pm PT**

Psychosocial & Community Resources

- [Alcohol & Drug Information Referral Service \(ADIRS\)](#) connects individuals of all ages in BC with information about detox, counselling, treatment programs, recovery homes, support groups, and other education and prevention resources. **Available in the Lower Mainland at 604-660-9382 and elsewhere in BC at 1-800-663-1441.**
- [HelpStartsHere: Mental Health and Substance Use Care in BC](#) for virtual services offered across all BC regional health authorities.
- [Mind Space](#) offers a variety of mental health groups to help build skills and improve well-being. Open to all adults (17.5+) living in BC.
- [Resources for Families & Caregivers](#), including support groups, toolkits, and more
- [Sleepwell](#) is a university-based research and knowledge mobilization program through Dalhousie University with resources for clinicians supporting patients using prescription sleep aids, CBTi training, infographics and more.

Harm Reduction and Peer resources

- [BCCSU's Drug Checking](#) Program [monthly summaries](#) give high-level overview of the data collected by their drug checking partners.
- [CAPSA Peer Support](#) offers free peer-led group meetings for anyone seeking to improve their relationship with substances. Families, allies, and other professionals are also welcome to attend.
- Clinical and community resources on harm reduction, services, and treatment access in Northern BC are available [here](#).
 - o For peer network connecting individuals in the North with healthcare services, email: Peer.Network@northernhealth.ca
- [DrugCocktails.ca](#) provides information about the risk and effects of mixing various medication and substances.
- Drug checking services:
 - o [Drug Checking BC](#) provides a list of local drug checking services
 - o [Get Your Drugs Tested](#) offers testing by mail and is available to all people living in Canada
 - o [Substance Drug Checking](#) offers testing by mail for people on Vancouver Island or by drop-in in Victoria
 - o [Mountainside Harm Reduction Society](#) provides peer-led drug checking in the Fraser Health region
 - o [POUNDS Project](#) provides drug checking and Overdose Prevention Services in Prince George
- [HeretoHelp](#) provides mental health and substance use-related information, including personal stories, self-help resources, and connection to services in BC.
 - o [Learn about alcohol](#), [view info sheets](#), and [youth and alcohol](#)
- [LifeRing](#) provides peer support programs across BC (in-person and online options).
- The [Lifeguard App](#) is available through the [iOS App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). Recent updates include a more accessible and streamlined design, enhanced mental health resources, peer support access, and expanded listings of local health and social services.
 - o **Note:** Depending on where a person lives, dispatch time for Emergency Health Services is a potential limitation of the Lifeguard app, given the impacts of damage to the brain and other organs caused by prolonged apnea (lack of breathing). The benefits and drawbacks of using an app compared to having another person present should be discussed with the client

- [National Overdose Response Service \(NORS\) Line](#) is a 24/7, 365-days a year, virtual safer consumption hotline available in Canada. Call or text 1-888-688-6677.
- [Pay What You Can Peer Support](#) offers 25+ online support groups on a broad range of topics.
- [Sign up to receive texts with BC-specific toxic drug and health alerts.](#) This service is offered by Toward the Heart and BCCDC in collaboration with regional health authority and community partners. Text the word JOIN to 253787 (ALERTS) to sign up.
- Towards the Heart's [Site Finder](#) to find local harm reduction services

Resources for people who self-identify as Indigenous

- [Aboriginal Cultural Practices: A Guide for Physicians and Allied Health Professionals Working at Vancouver Coastal Health](#) provides information on Indigenous cultural practices in clinical settings.
- BC regional health authority Indigenous or Aboriginal Health Programs offer tailored services and programs to support Indigenous patients and families in accessing health and wellness services:
 - o [Interior Health](#)
 - o [Fraser Health](#)
 - o [Island Health](#)
 - o [Northern Health](#)
 - o [Vancouver Coastal Health](#)
- [Cuystwi quests](#) are free online programs for Indigenous youth aimed at promoting wellness on their journey to adulthood. To find out more or to request a link, please email cuystwi@phsa.ca.
- [First Nations Health Authority](#) (FNHA) provides resources for learning more about Indigenous wellness and cultural practices.
 - o [Detox and Withdrawal](#)
 - o [Finding your Treatment Pathway](#)
 - o [First Nations Treatment Centres](#)
 - o [Toxic Drug Crisis Data](#)
- [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#) provides virtual appointments for all First Nations Peoples and their families living in BC. Call **1-855-344-3800**, 7 days a week, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm to schedule an appointment. Printable poster available [here](#).
- [Friendship Centres](#) offer cultural practices to Indigenous Peoples across BC. To locate the nearest Friendship Centre, click [here](#).
- [Indigenous Harm Reduction](#) is a culturally rooted approach that addresses the impacts of colonialism and reconnects First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to land, spirit, and community in substance use care.
- [Mariha's List](#) is a guide to grants, resources, programs, and support for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples across Canada.
- Substance use [Poster series: Humility, Respect, Connection and Love](#), and [supports and services](#) are available to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.
- [Thunderbird Wellness App](#) is free and is available on the [iOS App Store](#). Promotes a strengths-based, trauma informed approach to supporting Indigenous wellness.
- [Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service](#) provides free access to specialists in addictions medicine and psychiatry as well as mental health and allied health care professionals. Referrals required from

health and wellness providers, Knowledge Keepers and Elders, and is available to all First Nations people and their families living in BC.

- **For Clients:** Contact your health and wellness provider or (the [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#)) for referral
- **For Health and wellness providers:** Call 1-833-456-7655 for questions or to make a referral

Appendix: Pathways BC Navigation for Benzodiazepine-related Resource

Filter My Search

☐ All
☒ Consultants
☐ Health Authority & Community
☐ Reason for Referral
☐ Clinician Tools
☐ Patient Info
☐ Forms

☐ My Local Area
☐ Whole Province

- Consultants and Wait Times for [Addiction Medicine](#)
- Health Authority & Community Services for [Addictions / Substance Use](#)
- [Benzodiazepines Fact Sheet \(PHSA\)](#)
- Consultants and Wait Times for [Adverse drug reaction](#)
- Consultants and Wait Times for [Drug eruption / rash](#)
- [Polypharmacy - Deprescribing - Sedative-hypnotic Medications \[zopiclone, benzodiazepines\] \(deprescribing.org\)](#)
- [Deprescribing - Toolkit for Reducing Sedative-hypnotic Medications \[zopiclone, benzodiazepines\] - 13 pages \(Choosing Wisely\)](#)
- [Anxiety - A booklet for people who take a benzodiazepine regularly \(RxFiles\)](#)
- [Managing Benzodiazepine Use in Older Adults \(CEP\)](#)
- [Polypharmacy - Benzodiazepine and Sedative Deprescribing Handout \(Deprescribing.org\)](#)
- [Addictions - Seniors - Benzodiazepine Use Disorder \(CCSMH\)](#)
- [Polypharmacy - Benzodiazepine Deprescribing Algorithm \(Deprescribing.org\)](#)
- [Benzodiazepine Conversion Calculator \(MDCalc\)](#)
- [Don't prescribe or dispense benzodiazepines without building a discontinuation strategy into the patient's treatment plan \(except for patients who have a valid indication for long-term use\). \(Choosing Wisely\)](#)
- [Don't use benzodiazepines or other sedative-hypnotics in older adults as first choice for insomnia, agitation or delirium. \(Choosing Wisely\)](#)
- Health Authority & Community Services for [Slow Release Oral Morphine - Kadian](#)
- Health Authority & Community Services for [Education & Employment Support - Addictions](#)