

## GETTING STARTED ON *Benzodiazepine Treatment*

Patient Name \_\_\_\_\_ Provider Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### WHAT ARE BENZODIAZEPINES?

Benzodiazepines are a class of sedative medications typically prescribed on a short-term basis for conditions such as anxiety and panic disorder. While effective, benzodiazepines have significant addictive potential and carry numerous risks when used long-term. Physical dependence on benzodiazepines can occur after 2-4 weeks of daily use and may result in potentially severe withdrawal symptoms (e.g., psychosis, seizures, or death) when abruptly discontinued. Patients taking benzodiazepines may also be at risk for developing benzodiazepine use disorder, which is characterized by compulsive overuse of the medication, despite causing problems at home, at work, or with friends and family.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF LONG-TERM BENZODIAZEPINE USE?

- Physical dependence
- Memory problems, confusion, and dementia
- Personality and/or mood changes, depression, and irritability
- Worsening of PTSD symptoms
- Overdose (especially when combined with alcohol, opioids, or street drugs)
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Impaired balance and increased risk of falls
- Birth defects and withdrawal symptoms in newborns

### HOW CAN IDEAL OPTION HELP?

Ideal Option offers a treatment plan that can make you safer and more comfortable as you taper off benzodiazepines.

**You might benefit from benzodiazepine treatment at Ideal Option if:**

- You experience symptoms such as anxiety, tremors, sweating, or nausea within several hours to a few days after stopping or reducing benzodiazepine use
- Your benzodiazepine use is causing problems at home, at your job, or with friends and family

**Ideal Option follows a 4-step approach to treating patients with problematic benzodiazepine use:**

- 1. Patient understands and agrees** to follow a benzodiazepine taper program, with the goal of completely stopping benzodiazepine use.
- 2. Patient stabilizes** on a prescribed benzodiazepine.
- 3. Patient begins the taper process.** The taper process may take several weeks to months depending on numerous factors.
- 4. Patient completes taper plan and achieves goal** of stopping benzodiazepine use.

## Next Visit

You should plan to be seen at Ideal Option regularly, both during the stabilization and taper process, to ensure your safety.

Please schedule your next visit for (date): \_\_\_\_\_

## Nurse Care Manager

Your Nurse Care Manager will check in with you regularly to monitor your symptoms and answer questions about the medication. You can also reach out to a nurse at **any time** (available 24/7) by calling 1-877-522-1275 (press #1, then #6).

## When to Call 911

We recommend that you call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department for any of the following symptoms during your benzodiazepine treatment with Ideal Option:

- Severe symptoms of benzodiazepine withdrawal (e.g., agitation, tremors, nausea/vomiting, or rapid heart rate)
- Disorientation or confusion
- Oversedation (extreme grogginess or difficulty waking up)
- Seizure

## For Your Safety

1. **Do not operate a vehicle or heavy machinery** when taking benzodiazepines.
2. **Do not take other benzodiazepines or obtain additional benzodiazepine prescriptions.** The use of multiple benzodiazepines may cause oversedation and death.
3. **Do not combine sedative medications.** Combining sedatives (e.g. benzodiazepines, opioids, and alcohol) can have severe and unpredictable effects and may lead to oversedation and death.
4. **Check before starting new medications.** Speak with your provider before starting any new medication while taking a benzodiazepine.
5. **Safe storage is critical.** Store your prescriptions away from other people, especially children, preferably in a secure location such as a lockbox or safe. We cannot replace lost or stolen medication.