

BENZOS

Benzodiazepines, or benzos, are an anxiolytic (anti-anxiety) medication that, when used safely, can be an effective tool in the addiction recovery process. Benzodiazepines can also be used to treat Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (AWS). Soul Surgery, a state-of-the-art addiction and mental health center in Scottsdale, Arizona, counts benzodiazepines as one of their many tools aiding the recovery process.

Benzodiazepines can be used to treat numerous issues involving the generalized label of “anxiety.” Anxiety wears many masks, some of which are generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and nervousness. With Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome, anxiety can manifest in such forms as panic disorder, panic attacks, or agoraphobia.

The licensed team of medical professionals at the Soul Surgery Addiction and Mental Health Center is devoted to an individualized recovery protocol for each patient. Benzodiazepine, one of the evidence-based medications, is certainly on the table for those experiencing any number of anxiety patterns born of substance withdrawal or alcohol withdrawal. Soul Surgery is one of the first recovery centers in the country to use Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for the critical rehabilitation necessary to overcome substance use and alcoholism, and their success rate is stellar.

The use of benzos to medically assuage anxiety is a significant help to those navigating the painful waters of rehabilitation. Benzodiazepines can calm the patient and can act as a sleep aid. When administered and monitored in a safe medically-licensed behavioral health facility such as Soul Surgery, benzos can be a safe tool. When paired with other recovery-based treatments such as Soul Surgery’s IOP (Intensive Outpatient) therapy, Relapse Prevention programs, and strong 12-Step program, benzodiazepine can enable the patient to move forward with less discomfort.

Alcohol abuse is the second most prevalent psychiatric problem in the world today, only following major depression (according to a [study](#) in *The British Journal of Psychiatry*). The longer a patient has abused alcohol, the more likely it is that their alcohol withdrawal symptoms will be severe when they initially detox. Alcohol withdrawal can be very serious and even dangerous, and it is important that a patient receive treatment from a professionally licensed team in a safe environment where they are monitored. In such a facility, if the symptoms appear dangerous, immediate attention is right there. Some severe symptoms of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome include heart palpitations, delirium tremens, seizures, hallucinations, nightmares, restlessness, irritability, headaches, nausea, and vomiting. This happens because alcohol abuse changes a person’s brain chemistry; after prolonged alcohol abuse, when the alcohol is taken away, the brain begins experiencing excessive neuronal activity.

Benzos can be used to treat alcohol withdrawal, because the medication depresses the central nervous system and enhances the body’s neurotransmitter known as GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid), which, in turn, reduces brain activity. This reduction in brain activity gives the patient a feeling of calm. Benzodiazepines can treat many of the symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, including seizures, tremors, chills, nausea, vomiting, difficulty sleeping, irritability, restlessness, headaches, and general pain. Because benzos depress the central nervous system, they calm the body’s reactions to Alcohol Withdrawal Symptom, providing the patient with relief. There are many types and brands of benzodiazepines which can be prescribed by a licensed physician trained in substance use, such as the doctors on Soul Surgery’s team. Some of the more commonly known brands of benzos include Xanax, Klonopin, Valium, Ativan, and Restoril.

According to a [study](#) published in the *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research for Doctors*, there are eight important factors to consider when deciding whether a patient needs inpatient care during alcohol withdrawal: older age, past history of delirium tremens or alcohol withdrawal seizure, severe withdrawal symptoms at initial assessment, co-morbid medical or surgical illness, presence of dehydration, electrolyte disturbances (hyponatremia or hypokalemia), deranged liver enzymes, and the presence of structural brain lesions. Benzodiazepines can be habit-forming, and it is important that a patient only take benzos as directed by a licensed physician, like the doctors on Soul Surgery’s medical team. Rehabilitating within the confines of a renowned facility such as Soul Surgery increases every patient’s safe success rate.

Criticism of Medication-Assisted Treatment usually centers around the argument that rehabilitation specialists are simply trading one drug for another. Or maybe physicians are somehow benefitting from pharmaceutical company perks. Medication-Assisted Treatment has also taken hits from those in favor of the long-held belief in the abstinence method. However, with overdose and death rates more than doubling in this country, Medication-assisted treatment is proving its mettle by significantly decreasing the loss of life. Note the key words “assisted” and “treatment.” Medication alone certainly is dangerous. Recovering at home is certainly dangerous. But medication within a licensed and renowned facility, and medication that is assisted by a combination of individualized and evidence-based strategies such as those offered at Soul Surgery, is proving that MAT can be a strong path to rehabilitation.

When medical protocols are integrated with therapeutic protocols, such as the progressive treatments offered by Soul Surgery, patients and their families see progress. These treatment strategies, of course, will vary from patient to patient, and will be tailored to individual needs. Integrated treatments within the Medication-Assisted Treatment model can include Soul Surgery’s Professional Counseling team, Psychoeducational group work, the Twelve-step method, BioFeedback, EMDR, IV Therapy, Craniosacral Therapy, and a plethora of other services offered as part of their fully licensed IOP, PHP and OP programs, all conveniently offered under one roof. In addition, Soul Surgery has a full gym with a rock-climbing wall and basketball court on site, and their sober home includes a tennis court, a swimming pool, and a private chef. The Soul Surgery Addiction and Mental Health Center’s holistic approach soundly increases the success rate for every patient dedicated to their recovery.