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A clinical observation I want more physicians to hear. **Prescription benzodiazepine dependence is not the same problem as benzodiazepine addiction**, and treating them the same way is causing real harm. I'm a board certified psychiatrist and former FDA medical officer. Over the last several years at The Taper Clinic, I've worked with hundreds of patients coming off psychiatric medications, the majority of them benzodiazepines

Here is the pattern I see repeatedly: A type A, high functioning patient hits a major life stressor. They develop severe insomnia or a panic attack. A physician hands them a benzo, often with little warning about how difficult discontinuation can be. Years later, they want off. They check into a detox center. What happens next is predictable. Detox protocols are built for people with chaotic, high dose, illicit use.

They run 1 to 3 weeks. For a patient on a stable therapeutic dose for years, that pace is far too fast. Withdrawal becomes severe, and the response is to layer on medications. Most patients leave on an SSRI, gabapentin, and an antipsychotic.

One dependence becomes three. The deeper concern is protracted withdrawal, now reflected on the FDA labels for all benzodiazepines and discussed in the American Society of Addiction Medicine guidelines. Slower, patient led tapers are believed to reduce this risk. Faster tapers appear to increase it. I see the downstream effect in my practice constantly, and recovery is often measured in years.

The evidence based path is straightforward:

1. **Patient led taper**, typically 12 to 24 months.
2. **5 to 10% reductions in month one, adjusted based on symptoms.**

3. Liquid compounded formulations for precision dosing. (PD; in NL vrijwel voor alle benzo's en Z-drugs geteste [microdoses](#) vanuit de grondstof beschikbaar!
www.taperingstrip.nl)

4. Concurrent work on the underlying drivers, usually chronic hyperarousal, insomnia, and unmanaged anxiety. If you treat or prescribe to patients on long term benzodiazepines, please reconsider before referring to

inpatient detox. There is a better way, and our patients deserve it.