

Information for Traveller Women on Tablet Use and Abuse

JANUARY 2022



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Some tablets are used for managing sickness, anxiety, or pain and are only meant to be used for a short period of time.

The safest way to take tablets is to take them the way you are told to by your doctor or chemist.

Sometimes people have problems with their tablet use and need help to deal with this.



There are **four types** of tablets that people misuse and can become addicted to:



1

Medications that you buy over the counter

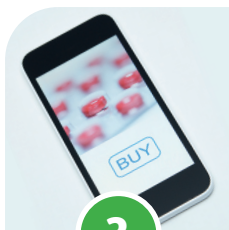
such as Solpadeine and Nurofen Plus



2

Prescription Medication

prescribed by a doctor, hospital, dentist or bought /borrowed from someone who has been prescribed them – such as tablets prescribed to help with anxiety or to sleep



3

'Fake' tablets bought on the street, from a dealer or online

they may look real but could have more dangerous substances in them – such as 'Xanax sticks'. These fake tablets are being sold in Ireland and they can increase the risk of overdose



4

Imported and illegal tablets

are tablets that are not available in Ireland – meaning a person will not be prescribed them by a GP and they are illegal to have or use, such as Tranax and 'Xanax sticks'

What does problem tablet use look like?



Some tablets use can lead to addiction which can happen after medium or long-term use. Using tablets not prescribed for you is risky and if bought from a dealer or online could be dangerous and can lead to overdose.



Medications that you buy over the counter...

Most over-the-counter medication that can cause problems has **Codeine** in it which is very addictive - **Codeine** is used to treat mild to severe pain and is in medications such as:

Solpadeine, Nurofen Plus, and some cough bottles.

It is important to always ask the chemist what is in the medication you are taking and to check the label for codeine in pain-relieving tablets or cough bottles.



Prescription medication:

There are some medicines **prescribed by doctors to treat anxiety, depression, or sleep problems that are often not used properly.** These are a group of tablets called Benzodiazepines. Some well-known ones are Xanax and Valium but you might hear them being called - 'benzos', 'tablets', D5s and D10s.

These are legal and safe to take when they are prescribed by your doctor and you are given advice on how to take them safely. Tablets borrowed or bought from people or got on the street can be fake tablets that look real and can be very dangerous.

There are **other tablets prescribed by doctors** that are addictive and when misused, can lead to problems these are called - Lyrica, 'Z' drugs (such as zimovane also known as 'zimmos'), Tramadol, OxyContin or Oxycodone.



Other side effects of tablet use can be:



What happens with medium to long-term use of tablets?

The use of any substance can cause serious **physical** and **mental health** problems and can affect you, your family, and wider community.

Using tablets for longer than you are told to can **'rewire' your brain** to expect it which means you may become dependent on it. When you are dependent on a tablet and stop using it you can go into withdrawals - withdrawals are what happens to your body and mind when you stop using tablets.

This can be dangerous and you may need medical help to treat these withdrawals.



Tablet use and mental health

Tablets can be used to treat mental health problems such as anxiety or poor sleep, if they are misused they can make people feel more anxious or depressed and at risk of self-harm or suicide.

Tablets and overdose

The risk of a tablet overdose increases if you mix tablets with other tablets, medications, or substances including alcohol. A tablet overdose is more likely to happen if you take tablets without a prescription or you buy 'fake' tablets.

Signs of a tablet overdose:

Blue lips/nails

Clammy skin

Slow breathing

Drowsiness

Vomiting

Someone who is not responding to noise or touch

Don't be afraid to get help, call **999** or **112** and don't leave anyone alone.

Always talk to your doctor or chemist about medication and its side effects. Your doctor should monitor your medication but if you are on it for a long time and feel your prescription is not being reviewed, talk to your doctor about it.

Don't stop taking tablets suddenly if you have been taking them for a long time because it can be very dangerous. The safest way is to reduce with the support of your doctor, chemist or support worker.



If you are concerned about your use or a loved one's use of tablets you can get help from the following:

- HSE drug and alcohol helpline 1800 459 459 (Mon-Fri 9.30am – 5.30pm) or email helpline@hse.ie
- Talk to your doctor
- Find your local addiction service: drugs.ie/services
- Contact your local Primary Health Care for Travellers Project
- Self-help support groups such as Narcotics Anonymous and SMART Recovery

For more information on tablet misuse and other drugs visit www.drugs.ie

This leaflet was made by Travellers, for Travellers with information to support you or a loved one who may be struggling with problem tablet use.

Produced by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre in conjunction with Primary Health Care Workers and National Traveller Health Networks.