

Alprazolam Shortage

Recently, alprazolam has been in limited supply at both retail pharmacies and mail service facilities. Alprazolam is commercially manufactured as 0.25mg, 0.5mg, 1mg, and 2mg strength tablets. Retail pharmacies and mail order facilities may have alprazolam in stock but not necessarily all strengths.

In response to the shortage of alprazolam, Xanax[®] (the branded product) has been temporarily added to the formulary. Xanax[®] XR, a recently approved sustained-release formulation of alprazolam, is **not** on the Highmark formulary.

Although alprazolam quantities are available in limited supply, there are many other benzodiazepines available to treat anxiety. The following generic products in the table below are included on the Highmark formulary. Please consider these alternatives for patients who have difficulty obtaining Xanax or its generic.

Formulary Benzodiazepine Anti-anxiety Agents

	Brand ^c Name	Generic Name	Approximate Equivalent Dose ^{a, 1}	Dosage Range ³ (mg/day)
<i>^{b, 2} Short - Intermediate-acting benzodiazepines</i>				
	Xanax [®]	alprazolam	0.5 mg	0.75 mg – 4 mg
	Ativan [®]	lorazepam	1 mg	2 mg- 4 mg
	Serax [®]	oxazepam	15 mg	30 mg – 120 mg
<i>^{b, 2} Long-acting benzodiazepines</i>				
	Valium [®]	diazepam	5 mg	4 mg – 40 mg
	Librium [®]	chlordiazepoxide	10 mg	15 mg – 100 mg
	Tranxene [®]	clorazepate	7.5 mg	15 mg – 60 mg

^a Elderly patients are treated with approximately one-half of dose listed

^b Based on effective half-life of parent drug and active metabolites

^c Brand products are non-formulary

References

1. DiPiro, JT., et al. *Pharmacotherapy: A Pathophysiologic Approach*. 4th Edition, 1999; 1187
2. Shader RI, Greenblatt DJ. Use of Benzodiazepines in Anxiety Disorders. *N Engl J Med* 1993; 328: 1398-1405.
3. Wickersham RM, Novak KK, McCarron SM, et al. (editors) *Facts and Comparisons*. St. Louis, MO.: Facts and Comparisons Inc., 2003.

This information presented above has been compiled from the available medical literature and is intended to serve as a reference. Individual patients' specific situations, which may preclude the use of this information, should always be considered when selecting drug therapy.