



## **Benzodiazepine Use and Epilepsy**

The epilepsy community has noted with interest the preliminary observational study from Canadian and French researchers suggesting a possible association between benzodiazepine use in the elderly and increased risk of Alzheimer disease. This study, based on claims data, stops short of proving causality and the authors acknowledge that additional research into the nature of the association is needed.

While used for many other conditions, benzodiazepines are sometimes used to treat seizures in people with epilepsy, when other therapies have failed, and are sometimes used as rescue therapy for seizure emergencies in both children and adults.

Abruptly stopping benzodiazepines in people after long-term treatment can lead to withdrawal seizures, even in people who do not have epilepsy. People receiving such therapy should not abruptly stop this (or any other) therapy without first discussing risks and benefits with their physician.

At this time, the American Epilepsy Society believes that, for the vast majority of people with epilepsy, there is not sufficient evidence of an increased risk of Alzheimer disease when benzodiazepines are used to treat epilepsy, and that the benefits of using these drugs in treating epilepsy may outweigh the risks.