



**Associatie van  
Academische  
Werkplaatsen VB**

## **TEMPLATE**

*The question below has been answered by the Academic Collaborative Centers affiliated with the Dutch Association of Academic Collaborative Centers Intellectual Disabilities. An overview of questions can be found on the [Association's website](#).*

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Academische Werkplaats GOUD

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## **Research question**

What is the relationship between the use of benzodiazepines and antipsychotics and the development of respiratory infections?

## **Summary**

At the moment, it is not possible to give advice on the use of antipsychotics or benzodiazepines in people with intellectual disability and a COVID-19 infection. There is currently no evidence available on this topic.

Previous research does indicate that the use of antipsychotics or benzodiazepines increases the risk of patients developing pneumonia. This Rapid Response aims to describe the available evidence and to formulate an advice for physicians responsible for prescribing antipsychotics and benzodiazepines.



## Take home message

It is currently not possible to give advice on the use of antipsychotics or benzodiazepines in people with intellectual disability and a COVID-19 infection.

The available studies indicate that there is an increased risk of developing pneumonia in patients who use antipsychotics or benzodiazepines. These studies included patients from the general and psychiatric population. However, it is very likely that the findings of these studies are transferable to patients with an intellectual disability. There is no indication that the relation between developing pneumonia and using antipsychotics or benzodiazepines would not apply in case of a COVID-19 infection. As a result, it is important to take the following recommendations into account when prescribing antipsychotics and/or benzodiazepines to patients with an intellectual disability:

- Ensure somatic causes for agitation are ruled out or treated.
- Use caution when prescribing and increasing the dosage of antipsychotics and benzodiazepines. When psychotropic drugs are prescribed, plan routine monitoring to identify possible deterioration of the (respiratory) condition of the patient.
- Be mindful of the development of respiratory complaints while using antipsychotics and/or benzodiazepines.
- When a patient is suspected of having pneumonia (either caused by COVID-19 or not) and uses antipsychotics or benzodiazepines, an evaluation of the prescribed medication needs to take place. Is it possible to lower the dosage of the psychotropic drugs?
- In the case of clozapine use, be aware of an increase in the blood levels and an absolute neutropenia in case of fever. Follow the advice of the Clozapine Plus Werkgroep [available from: <https://www.clozapinepluswerkgroep.nl/clozapine-en-het-coronavirus-leukocytencontroles-en-doses/>.]