



LORAZEPAM (ATIVAN) at End of Life:

A Simple Guide for Families

Purpose:

Calms anxiety, restlessness, fear, and breathing-related panic.

How to Give Lorazepam

(Always follow your hospice nurse's instructions.)

Common Hospice Dose: 1 mg every 4–6 hours as needed

OR 1 mg scheduled every 6–8 hours for ongoing symptoms

How to Give

Place under the tongue (best)
inside the cheek to dissolve.

May mix with the morphine dose and administer.

When to Give Lorazepam

Give lorazepam when you see:

Anxiety or Fear

- Worried expression
- Panicked breathing
- “I feel scared”

Restlessness or Agitation

- Picking at clothes or blankets
- Pulling at lines
- Constant repositioning
- Unable to settle

Breathing-Related Anxiety

- Fast breathing from panic
- Feeling unable to catch breath

Muscle Tension

- Tight jaw
- Clenched fists
- Rigid, uncomfortable posture

What to Expect After Giving Lorazepam

Normal, Expected Effects

- Calmer facial expression
- Relaxed muscles
- More peaceful breathing
- Less picking or agitation
- Patient may fall asleep

Timeline

15–30 minutes: first signs of relief

1 hour: medication fully working

4–6 hours: effects slowly fade

This Is All Normal

Sleeping more

Eyes closed but peaceful

Slower breathing that looks comfortable

Quiet, relaxed body

These are signs the medication is bringing comfort.

“Once symptoms like pain and shortness of breath are controlled, the body doesn't have to struggle as hard.

Often, patients are more relaxed and alert, allowing for better conversations and more meaningful time with family.”

CAREGIVER NOTES

(For reminders or instructions from your hospice nurse)

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