



Important Things to Know About Sleeping Tablets

- They can only deal with sleep problems in the short term.
- You should only use them for more than four weeks on the advice of your doctor.
- They can cause side effects such as dependence.
- Taking them with other drugs or alcohol can be a danger.
- They tend to help more to get to sleep than to stay asleep.
- If you take them every night, they might not work as well as they used to.
- There are other things that can be tried if you are having problems with your sleep.

What Causes Sleep Problems?

There are many things that can make it hard for you to sleep. Most of us will go through this at some point each year. The cause can be a variety of things and it doesn't tend to last long. Even so, if you are very distressed, your doctor can put you on sleeping tablets for a short period. However for many people, sleep problems occur daily over many years. In this case sleeping tablets are generally not used. The reason is that they won't work as well when used for long periods. Furthermore non-drug treatments often work very well in these circumstances (see [Insomnia](#) and [Good Sleep Habits](#)).

What Are Some Of The Commonly Used Sleeping Tablets?

- **Antihistamines** – You don't need a prescription to get these from pharmacies. but they're not designed as sleeping tablets. They can be very sedating and can last a long time. You can end up feeling more tired in the morning which is potentially dangerous, for example with driving. The effect of antihistamines

What Are Sleeping Tablets?

They are drugs that you take to try to get to sleep or stay asleep. As a rule, you take them when you get into bed. They start to work fairly quickly. You should start to feel tired soon after taking them. This can often be within 15 minutes. This means that you should not take them before you get into bed. If you do, you might get sleepy or unsteady on your feet. This will put you at risk of falling over.

Some tablets that are used to help with sleep have been specifically created for this. Other types (e.g. antihistamines) are used to treat other medical problems and feeling sleepy is just a side effect.

such as Restavit and Phenergan tends to wear off quickly.

- **Benzodiazepines** – This group includes Temazepam, Mogadon, Normison and Serepax. You can only get them on prescription. They are used to treat insomnia in the short-term (usually 3-4 weeks). In the longer term they can stop working. There is also the risk of “getting hooked” on them.
- **Benzodiazepine receptor agonists** – This group includes Stilnox and Zopiclone/Imovane. These are like benzodiazepines but they appear to be less addictive.
- **Antidepressants or antipsychotics** – This group includes antidepressants (e.g. Doxepin, Endep, Dothiepin, Avanza) and antipsychotics (e.g. Seroquel or Zyprexa). They are prescription only. In most cases, psychiatrists prescribe them when sleep problems occur with mental health problems.

What Should I Do If I Am Taking Sleeping Tablets But Can't Stop Them?

You need to talk with your doctor about this. There are many non-drug treatments that can treat poor sleep and work well. If you find that you rely on sleeping tablets, your GP may refer you to a sleep centre for an appointment with a [Sleep Specialist](#). If you've been having trouble with your sleep for a long time, there are non-drug treatments that work well (e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia). You can see a psychologist for these. Most people who try this find that they can cut down on or give up sleeping tablets and still sleep well. See also [Good Sleep Habits](#), [Insomnia](#), [Depression and Sleep](#), [Anxiety and Sleep](#).

Where Can I Find Out More Information?

http://helpguide.org/life/sleep_aids_medication_insomnia_treatment.htm

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A voluntary group offering assistance and support to people and their families living with sleep disorders

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The peak national association of clinicians and scientists devoted to investigation of sleep and its disorders

Disclaimer - Information provided here is general in nature and should not be seen as a substitute for professional medical advice.

Ongoing concerns about sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your local doctor.

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Sleep Health Foundation ABN 91 138 737 854

114/30 Campbell Street, Blacktown NSW 2148

T: +61 (0) 2 8814 8655 F: +61 (0) 2 9672 3884