

FACT SHEET

Zolpidem (including Stilnox brand)



National Prescribing Service Limited

SLEEPING TABLETS

FEBRUARY 2008

ZOLPIDEM has been marketed in Australia under the brand name Stilnox since late 2000. It is a prescription medicine that belongs to a class of sleeping tablets known as imidazopyridines. Several generic brands have since become available, including Dormizole, Stildem, Somidem and a sustained-release preparation known as Stilnox CR. A related medicine is zopiclone (Imovane, Imrest).

All medicines have potential side effects

Common side effects of zolpidem include drowsiness, dizziness, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, headache and muscle weakness.

More recently, there have been suspected adverse effects of zolpidem reported to Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). These have included abnormal sleep-related events, sleep walking and/or sleep talking, some of which led to injury.

We are not certain at this time if those adverse effects are caused by zolpidem or simply occurred at the same time as zolpidem was taken. These sleep-related behaviours may be reported after discovery by family members or carers, as the person may have no memory of the event.

These potential side effects are not common, but it is important to be aware of them and seek your doctor's advice.

Sleeping tablets are for short term use

NPS recommends non-medicine strategies to solve sleeping problems, such as exercising and avoiding drinks and food with caffeine.

For information about non-medicine strategies, read "Tips for getting to sleep without medicines" over the page.

What should I do if I think I have side effects?

Discuss your concerns immediately with your doctor.

Important information

If you take zolpidem, take the smallest dose possible for the shortest time possible. Do not take alcohol. Additional caution should be exercised by people who are taking other medicines that may cause drowsiness.

To minimise the potential side effects of taking zolpidem, see the back of this Fact Sheet.

NPS welcomes your feedback. Please email us at info@nps.org.au



National Prescribing Service Limited

NPS is an independent, non-profit organisation for Quality Use of Medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.
National Prescribing Service Limited | PO Box 1147 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 | Phone: 02 8217 8700 | Fax: 02 9211 7578 | Email: info@nps.org.au

FACT SHEET

Zolpidem (including Stilnox brand)



National Prescribing Service Limited

SLEEPING TABLETS

FEBRUARY 2008

What can I do to minimise the potential side effects of taking zolpidem?

At the doctor

Talk to your doctor about non-medicine strategies to solve sleeping problems. If a sleeping tablet is recommended, ask your doctor about the benefits and risks of taking a medicine to help you sleep.

Take an up-to-date list of your medicines and discuss any other medicines you are taking including prescription, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal remedies.

Medicines that may interfere or have an adverse reaction with zolpidem include: medicines to treat depression, anxiety and mental illness, pain relievers, muscle relaxants, antihistamines (e.g. hayfever medicines), and some antibiotics and antifungals.

Talk to your doctor if you have been taking sleeping tablets for a while and want to stop taking them.

To help during your visit to the doctor, download NPS Fact Sheets "What is a medicine?", "Talking with your doctor or pharmacist" and "Medicines List" at www.nps.org.au (click on 'consumers' then 'free information').

At home

Use non-medicine activities to help you sleep. For example, regular exercise, relaxation and avoidance of stimulants such as coffee, cola, tea, and other caffeinated drinks within five hours of bedtime are helpful for resolving your sleep problems. Read "Getting to sleep without medicines" at the bottom of this page.

If you need to take any sleep medicine, take the smallest dose possible to assist sleep, for the shortest time possible, and for no longer than four weeks.

Never take a higher dose than has been recommended by your doctor. Do not drink alcohol on the same day as taking zolpidem.

Take zolpidem **once you are in bed**, not on the way to bed, as it works within minutes.

You and your family should be alert for potential side effects. Tell family members, your partner or carer if you are taking zolpidem so they can help with any potential side effects. If you think you may be experiencing side effects, discuss these with your doctor as soon as possible. You can also call Medicines Line.

Read the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet about the medicine. Ask your pharmacist for the leaflet, which is also available at www.nps.org.au (click Consumer Medicine Information on menu at left).

Getting to sleep without medicines

During the day

- Maintain a regular routine.
- Spend 30–60 minutes outdoors in the late afternoon.
- Avoid having a daytime nap.
- Be as active as possible.

For more information see MedicinesTalk Spring 2004 issue at www.nps.org.au

In the evening

- Do 20–30 minutes of light exercise.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Relax and unwind an hour before bedtime.
- 'Switch off' from the day's activities and problems. If necessary, learn a relaxation technique.
- Make sure your bed and bedroom are not too hot nor too cold.

At bedtime

- Develop a regular bedtime routine.
- Go to bed only when you feel sleepy.
- Don't read or watch television in your bedroom.
- Enjoy relaxing in bed even if you don't fall asleep immediately.
- If you can't fall asleep or get back to sleep, think of pleasant things.
- Get up at the same time each morning.

NPS welcomes your feedback. Please email us at info@nps.org.au



For more information about medicines call Medicines Line on 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm EST.

Medicines Line is funded by National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) and operated by pharmacists at Mater Misericordiae Health Services Brisbane Limited. To help you remember the number, you can order Medicines Line fridge magnets at www.nps.org.au – click on 'consumers' then 'catalogue'.