



National Prescribing Service Limited

Media Release

22 February 2008

NPS clarifies issues related to Stilnox, a brand of zolpidem

National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) is advising consumers concerned about the possible adverse reactions associated with the sleeping medicine Stilnox to visit their doctor to assess whether they are at risk. Stilnox is a brand name for the medicine zolpidem.

NPS CEO Dr Lynn Weekes says, "We recommend that consumers use non-medicine strategies to solve sleeping problems including regular exercise, relaxation and avoiding stimulants such as coffee, tea, cola and other caffeinated drinks.

"However if you are taking zolpidem, take as little as possible for the shortest time possible. It is also important not to take zolpidem on the same day as alcohol and to discuss with your doctor if you are taking any other medicines."

NPS has issued a Sleeping Medicines Fact Sheet advising of the potential side effects of zolpidem. "It is very important for people to discuss these with their doctor or pharmacist. Your doctor can advise whether you are at risk for any potential side effects," explained Dr Weekes.

Zolpidem has been marketed in Australia since late 2000. It is a prescription medicine that belongs to a class of sleep medicines known as imidazopyridines. Several generic brands are available, including Dormizole, Stildem, Somidem and a sustained-release preparation known as Stilnox CR. A related medicine is zopiclone (Imovane, Imrest).

Zolpidem is prescribed for people who have difficulty sleeping or 'insomnia'. It is approved for short term use only (2 weeks and no longer than 4 weeks). The Therapeutic Goods Administration, Australia's regulatory agency for medical drugs and devices, yesterday issued a "boxed warning" for doctors and other prescribers.

The warning advises "Zolpidem may be associated with potentially dangerous complex sleep-related behaviours which may include sleep walking, sleep driving and other bizarre behaviours. Zolpidem is not to be taken with alcohol. Caution is needed with other CNS depressant drugs. Limit use to four weeks maximum under close medical supervision."

The NPS Sleeping Medicines Fact Sheet can be downloaded at <http://web.nps.org.au/media/zolpidem.pdf>.

For more information about medicines, consumers can call Medicines Line on 1300 888 763 and speak to a pharmacist between 9am and 6pm Monday to Friday, Eastern Standard Time (EST) for the cost of a local call (mobile calls may cost more).

ENDS

Dr Lynn Weekes is available for interviews. To set up an interview please contact Georgina Green on 0419 618 365 or ggreen@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.