

# Zopiclone

(pronounced zop-ee-clone)

## Why has zopiclone been prescribed?

Zopiclone is known as a hypnotic drug or 'sleeping tablet'. These medications are prescribed to treat insomnia.

## What are the benefits of taking zopiclone?

Hypnotics may be helpful for people who have difficulty getting to sleep, who sleep only for short periods or who awaken very early or many times during the night.

## Are there any precautions with zopiclone?

Zopiclone is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe zopiclone, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) if you have myasthenia gravis, sleep apnoea syndrome, severe lung disease, respiratory failure or suffer from kidney problems or severe liver trouble.
- b) if you are taking any other medication, particularly sedative antihistamines, metoclopramide, antibiotics such as erythromycin, clarithromycin or rifampicin, medication for schizophrenia or depression, medication to reduce saliva production such as atropine or hyoscine, medication for anxiety or insomnia, anticonvulsants or strong pain killers. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines. St John's Wort should not be taken by patients prescribed zopiclone.
- c) if you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant
- d) if you have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient of zopiclone tablets.

## What is the usual dose of zopiclone?

The usual adult dose is 7.5mg at night. This may be lower in older people.

## How should zopiclone be taken?

Zopiclone is usually taken once a day, at night. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time, for example if you work nights. It is recommended that taking zopiclone should be limited to two to four weeks.

## What form does zopiclone come in?

Zopiclone is available only as tablets. The tablets are available as 3.75mg and 7.5mg.

## What should be done if a dose is missed?

Ideally zopiclone should not be taken regularly. It is recommended that it should only be taken every second or third night or when absolutely necessary.

## What will happen when zopiclone is first taken?

Zopiclone should start to work quite quickly, usually within 30 minutes. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. We have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long-term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer's leaflet.

## Reporting side effects

The 'Yellow Card' scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0800 100 3352 or go to [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk).

## Is zopiclone addictive?

Zopiclone is not addictive, but if hypnotics are taken for extended periods or at high doses there may be risk that tolerance may develop. Tolerance means that higher doses are needed to achieve the same effect. If you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings. Symptoms usually only occur after extended use and can include return of insomnia, anxiety, sweating, headache, palpitations and panic attacks. Reducing the dose of zopiclone slowly may make these symptoms less severe.

### What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking zopiclone should not drink alcohol. This is because both hypnotics and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken together, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls and accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol may make sleep problems worse. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.


### Is it OK to stop taking zopiclone when symptoms go away?

Yes. Zopiclone should be taken only for short periods - ideally for less than two weeks. Other methods of dealing with insomnia should also be tried. You should always discuss with your prescriber any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines.

### Are there any alternatives to zopiclone?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although hypnotics have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ in the side effects they produce. There are other treatments for insomnia available so most people can find one which suits them. Psychological and practical therapies such as sleep hygiene can also help in some people with insomnia, either as an alternative to medication or alongside it.

## Summary of side effects

Side effect	Side effect
<b>Bitter or metallic taste - Common</b>  <b>What can be done about it?</b> If this is troublesome, ask your prescriber about alternatives.	
<b>(Other less common) side effects</b>	<b>How common is it and what can be done about it?</b>
Headache	<b>Uncommon</b> This should wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Dizziness	<b>Uncommon</b> This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Drowsiness (the morning after)	<b>Uncommon</b> Tell your prescriber if you feel drowsy the morning after taking zopiclone. Do not drive if you are drowsy or dizzy the next day.
Nausea (with or without vomiting)	<b>Uncommon</b> This should wear off within a few days. Taking the medication with food may help. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Dry mouth	<b>Uncommon</b> This should wear off within a few days. Sugar-free boiled sweets, chewing gum or eating citrus fruits may help. Discuss with the prescriber if this persists.
Double vision	<b>Uncommon</b> This usually occurs at the beginning of treatment, discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Confusion	<b>Rare</b> Tell your prescriber if taking zopiclone causes any changes in mood, perception, or thinking ability.
Irritability	
Aggression	
Confusion	
Depressed mood	
Amnesia (memory loss)	
Hallucination	

Nightmares	
Sleep walking or any other activity while asleep	<b>Very rare</b> This maybe increased if drinking alcohol or taking higher doses. Tell your prescriber straightaway if you or someone else is aware of any odd behaviour while sleeping. Zopiclone will need to be discontinued
Rash	<b>Very rare</b> Tell the prescriber straightaway if any rash develops.
Incoordination	<b>Very rare</b> Tell your prescriber if you experience difficulty coordinating movements.

Very common = almost everyone affected      Common = many people affected      Uncommon = some people affected  
Rare = few people affected      Very rare = very few or no one affected

### Disclaimer

*This leaflet is to help you understand more about your medication. This is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (see <http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>). Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some of the effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet you may find a lot of information there as well, but be careful, as internet based information is not always accurate. If in doubt consult your GP or a health care professional.*

***This leaflet has been supplied by:***

Medicines Information, Pharmacy Department, Maudsley Hospital, London SE5 8AZ | **Telephone:** 020 3228 2317

Artwork by Oscar Millar  
[www.millarstratton.co.uk](http://www.millarstratton.co.uk)