

## Nitrazepam (pron. nigh-traz-e-pam)

### What is nitrazepam used for?

Nitrazepam (also known as Mogadon<sup>®</sup>) is mainly used to help treat insomnia i.e. problems getting to sleep. It is one of a number of medicines called "hypnotics" and is sometimes called a "benzodiazepine". It is available as tablets and a syrup.

### What is the usual dose of nitrazepam?

The usual dose of nitrazepam is around 5mg at bedtime.

### How should I take nitrazepam?

Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach quickly and do not stick in your throat. For the liquid, use a medicine spoon or oral syringe. Use it carefully to make sure you measure the correct amount.

### When should I take nitrazepam?

Take your nitrazepam at bedtime, probably about half an hour before you go to bed. There is no problem about taking nitrazepam with or after food.

### What are the alternatives to nitrazepam?

There are many other medicines (e.g. the "Z hypnotics"), talking therapies and treatments for insomnia, and the causes of insomnia. See our "Handy charts" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

### How long will nitrazepam take to work?

Nitrazepam usually starts to work in about an hour. The effect wears off in about 4-8 hours or so.

### How long will I need to keep taking nitrazepam for?

Please look one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice on how long you might need to take it for. It is not a good idea to take it every night as the effect may start to wear off.

### Is nitrazepam addictive?

Nitrazepam is not addictive as such, but you can get some symptoms if you stop it suddenly (see the next question). It is also true that it can be abused or misused by some people.

### Can I stop taking nitrazepam suddenly?

Some people get something called "rebound insomnia" when they stop a hypnotic. This means they find it even more difficult to get to sleep than before. It is best to take nitrazepam only when you need it but if you have taken it every night for more than a few weeks, it might be best to reduce the dose slowly over a few days. You could discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

### What should I do if I forget to take a dose of nitrazepam?

This is not really a problem. You can take a dose if you are still awake but the effect can last for up to 8 hours or more so be aware that you may feel sleepy in the morning.

### Can I drink alcohol while I am taking nitrazepam?

If you drink alcohol while taking nitrazepam it may make you feel more sleepy, especially the next morning. This is particularly important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

### Will nitrazepam affect my other medication?

Nitrazepam has only a few interactions with other medicines.

- The effect of nitrazepam can be decreased by caffeine (e.g. in tea, coffee, cola drinks, some energy drinks), theophylline or aminophylline (for asthma)
- If nitrazepam is taken with alcohol, it will cause more sleepiness. You will also get more sleepiness if you take nitrazepam with anything else that causes sleepiness e.g. some antihistamines, antidepressants, pain killers, antipsychotics, anticonvulsants and many other medicines
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and nitrazepam

Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

## What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking nitrazepam?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from nitrazepam.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>COMMON</b> ( <i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Hangover	You feel sleepy or sluggish the next morning.	Don't drive or use machinery. Discuss this with your doctor as there are some sleeping tablets that are less likely to do this.
Fatigue and sleepiness during the day	You feel tired, especially in the morning.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting nitrazepam, tell your doctor. It may be possible to reduce your dose.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie or sit down if you feel it coming on. Don't drive.
<b>UNCOMMON</b> ( <i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Ataxia	Being unsteady on your feet.	Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her.
<b>RARE</b> ( <i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i> )		
Aggression	Feeling excitable. You may be talkative, intrusive, unfriendly or disinhibited.	Discuss this with your doctor. He or she may want to adjust your medicine or dose.
Confusion	Your mind is all mixed up or confused.	Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her. He or she may want to adjust your medicine or dose.
Hypotension	Low blood pressure – this can make you feel dizzy, particularly when you stand up.	It is not dangerous. Don't stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive.
Amnesia	Loss of short-term memory. Difficulty in remembering.	It is not dangerous. Discuss with your doctor if you are worried.
Rashes	Blotches seen on the skin.	Stop taking nitrazepam and see your doctor now.
<b>OTHER</b>		
Rebound insomnia	More difficult to get to sleep if you stop taking nitrazepam.	If you feel like this for more than a week after stopping nitrazepam, tell your doctor.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

## Will I need a blood test if I am taking nitrazepam?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking nitrazepam.

## Can I drive or cycle while I am taking nitrazepam?

You may feel a bit sleepy the next morning after taking nitrazepam. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times. Until this wears off, or you know how nitrazepam affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

**The small print:** This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.