

Zopiclone (pron. zo-pea-clone)

What is zopiclone used for?

Zopiclone (also known as Zimovane[®]) 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 "Z hypnotic" for obvious reasons. It is available as tablets.

What is the usual dose of zopiclone?

The usual dose of zopiclone is 7.5mg at night.

How should I take zopiclone?

Swallow the tablet with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that the tablet does not stick in your throat and reaches your stomach quickly.

When should I take zopiclone?

Take your zopiclone at bedtime. There is no problem about taking zopiclone with or after food.

What are the alternatives to zopiclone?

There are many other medicines (e.g. the benzodiazepines), 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 zopiclone take to work?

Zopiclone 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 zopiclone 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 zopiclone addictive?

Zopiclone is not addictive as such, although some people have abused them.

Can I stop taking zopiclone 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 zopiclone 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 zopiclone?

This is not really a problem. You can take a dose if you are still awake but the effect can last for up to 4-6 hours so be aware that you may feel drowsy in the morning.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking zopiclone?

If you drink alcohol while taking zopiclone 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 zopiclone affect my other medication?

Zopiclone has only a few interactions with other medicines.

- Zopiclone can cause sleepiness (a bit obvious, as that's the reason people take them!) and so you should be careful if taking it with alcohol or another medicine that also causes sleepiness e.g. benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam), some antidepressants etc
- The effects of zopiclone can be increased by itraconazole (for infections)
- The effects of zopiclone can be decreased by erythromycin or rifampicin (both for infections)
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and zopiclone

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 zopiclone?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from zopiclone. These are side effects from taking higher doses of zopiclone, but if you just take it at night then you will probably get very few side effects.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Metallic taste in the mouth	You get an odd bitter sensation, like you had just sucked some metal or had a filling put in by a dentist	This should wear off in a week or so. It is not harmful. Try taking it with some food.
LESS COMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Nausea and vomiting	Feeling sick and being sick.	If you are feeling sick for more than a week, contact your doctor. This tends to wear off after a few days or so.
Hangover	You feel sleepy or sluggish the next morning.	Don't drive or use machinery.
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 zopiclone, tell your doctor. It may be possible to reduce your dose.
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
Confusion, dizziness	Your mind is light-headed or all mixed up. Finding it hard to co-ordinate your movements, especially in the morning	Tell your doctor. It may be possible to alter your dose or try something else.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Nightmares	Unpleasant dreams	This probably means your dose is too high. Talk to your doctor about this.
Hallucinations	You see or hear things that are not there.	Tell your doctor. It may be possible to lower your dose or change your zopiclone
OTHER		
Rebound insomnia	More difficult to get to sleep if you stop taking zopiclone.	If you feel like this for more than a week after stopping zopiclone, tell your doctor.
Somnambulism	Sleep-walking or doing other odd things while asleep.	This is very rare but if you think you might be doing things while you are asleep let your doctor know as soon possible.

There are many other side effects that might occur. Some are common, some less common, some rare, and some so rare we don't really know if the medicine caused it. If you develop any unusual symptoms ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about them next time you meet. 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 zopiclone?

You should not need any blood tests while you are taking zopiclone.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking zopiclone?

You may feel a sleepy the next morning after taking zopiclone. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times. Until this wears off, or you know how zopiclone 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.