



Zaleplon

(Pronounced zal-a-plon)

Why has zaleplon been prescribed?

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

What are the benefits of taking zaleplon?

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

Are there any precautions with zaleplon?

Zaleplon is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe zaleplon, 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 or respiratory failure or suffer from severe liver or severe kidney trouble.
- b) If you are taking any other medication, particularly sedative antihistamines, antibiotics such as erythromycin or rifampicin, medication for schizophrenia or depression, 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.
- 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 zaleplon capsules.

What is the usual dose of zaleplon?

The usual adult dose is 10mg at night. This may be lower in older people.

How should zaleplon be taken?

Zaleplon 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.

What form does zaleplon come in?

Zaleplon is available only as capsules. The capsules are available as 5mg and 10mg.

What should be done if a dose is missed?

Ideally zaleplon should not be taken regularly. It is recommended that it should only be taken every second or third night or when absolutely necessary. It is recommended that taking zaleplon should be limited to two to four weeks.

What will happen when zaleplon is first taken?

Zaleplon 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 0808 100 3352 or go to www.mhra.gov.uk.

Is zaleplon addictive?

Zaleplon 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 zaleplon slowly may make these symptoms less severe.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking zaleplon 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 zaleplon when symptoms go away?

Yes. Zaleplon 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 zaleplon?

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

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Headache	Uncommon This should wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Dizziness	Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Drowsiness (the morning after)	Uncommon Tell your prescriber if you feel drowsy the morning after taking zaleplon. Do not drive if you are drowsy or dizzy the next day.
Nausea (with or without vomiting)	Uncommon This should wear off within a few days. Taking the medication with food may help. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.

Amnesia (memory loss)	Uncommon Tell your prescriber straightaway if you experience any loss of memory.
Double vision	Uncommon This usually occurs at the beginning of treatment, discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Confusion	Rare Tell your prescriber if you notice any change in your mood or ability to think clearly.
Nightmares	Rare Tell your prescriber straightaway if nightmares become more frequent.
Incoordination	Rare Tell your prescriber if you experience difficulty coordinating movements.
Difficulty in concentrating	Very rare Tell your prescriber if you notice any change in your mood or ability to think clearly.
Depressed mood	Very rare Tell your prescriber if you notice any change in your mood or ability to think clearly.
Photosensitivity (skin becomes extra sensitive to sunlight)	Very rare Tell your prescriber straightaway if you notice any change in skin sensitivity.
Sleep walking or any other activity while asleep	Very rare 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. Zaleplon will need to be discontinued
Rash	Very rare Tell the prescriber straightaway if any rash develops.
Hallucination	Very rare 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

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 does not replace the official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet.

For more information, visit www.slam.nhs.uk/meds or speak to a health care professional.

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