

DID YOU KNOW?



## Your Sleep Aid and its Health Risks

INCLUDING ZOLPIDEM (AMBIEN®), ESZOPICLONE (LUNESTA®), ZALEPLON (SONATA®), AND SUVOREXANT (BELSOMRA®)

**Did you know that when you take a sleep aid, side effects like drowsiness can linger into the next day?** Several studies have found a link between taking a sleep aid and serious injuries or health risks. That's why Independent Health places limits on the type and quantity of sleep aids you can receive – not because of cost, but because of safety.

### WHAT ARE MY HEALTH RISKS?

Various medical studies have identified several risks for individuals who take a sleep aid, compared to those who don't. Here are some of the results:

- **Hip fractures** – Older patients who took a sleep aid, including benzodiazepines (e.g., lorazepam, alprazolam, diazepam) and “Z drugs” (e.g., zolpidem, zaleplon, eszopiclone), had significantly increased risks of falls and hip fractures.
- **Hospitalization** – Risk of hospitalization for hip fracture or head injury increased based on the amount of drug taken. For zolpidem users, the risk of hip fracture more than doubled, and senior citizens had 20-times greater risk than younger users.
- **Head injury** – The risk of a serious head injury was more than doubled in patients using zolpidem. The risk was also greater in persons using zolpidem for more than 30 days.
- **Car accidents** – The rate of car accidents was more than doubled for those who were prescribed zolpidem.

#### LENGTH OF USE IS IMPORTANT

If you take 10 mg of zolpidem for 3 months or more, the risk of hospitalization for head injury or hip fracture quadruples.

## WHY ARE SO MANY STUDIES FOCUSED ON HIP FRACTURES?

In the United States, half of all patients who are hospitalized for a hip fracture are unable to live at home or independently afterward. Compared with older adults who did not have a hip fracture, the risk of dying was six times higher in women in the three months after hip fracture, and eight times higher in men.

## SHOULD I STOP TAKING MY SLEEP AID?

Do not stop taking your medication without speaking with your physician. Sleep aids need to be phased out of your system gradually so your body can adjust to sleeping without medication.

## SHOULD I SWITCH TO A DIFFERENT SLEEP AID?

All sleep aids have similar health risks. The safest way to get better sleep is to improve your “sleep hygiene” by using techniques to promote sleep without using medications:

- Establish a regular time to go to bed and wake up.
- Get plenty of natural sunlight to help maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.
- Avoid naps.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, such as reading.
- Avoid using the computer or watching TV before bed.
- Keep electronics (like phones or electronic tablets) out of the bedroom.
- Exercise regularly and stay active.
- Avoid drinking fluids or eating large meals within two hours of bedtime.
- Reduce caffeine consumption, and avoid caffeine and alcohol up to six hours before bedtime.
- Keep your bedroom cool at night, at about 65-66 degrees.



**If you have any questions or concerns about sleep aids, call your physician. He or she may be able to help you gradually stop your sleep aid.**



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