

The Risk of Long-Term Treatment With Sedative-Hypnotic Medications

Medications that you may be using to help you sleep (sleeping pills) are called sedative-hypnotics. They can be addictive and have side effects. Below are a few examples of these medications (there may be others that you are taking).

- alprazolam (Xanax®)
- diazepam (Valium®)
- temazepam (Restoril®)
- zolpidem (Sublinox®)
- lorazepam (Ativan®)

FACT

1. It is **no longer recommended** that you take this type of drug to treat your insomnia or sleep problems. With this medication, you are at great risk of memory and concentration problems, daytime fatigue, falls and fractures.
2. Even if you think you are NOT having any side effects, even a small amount of one of these drugs can affect the way your brain performs and slow down your reflexes. As you get older, these drugs stay in your body for longer and longer periods of time, affecting your balance and other senses. Daytime drowsiness can lead to car accidents and sleep walking.
3. It is possible for your body to develop a physical addiction to this medication. If you have developed such a dependency, your healthcare provider will help you to slowly cut down on the drug and help you in finding other ways to deal with your sleep problems. If you stop the drug too quickly, however, you may have trouble sleeping. You need medical advice on how to stop correctly and slowly over time.

Ask yourself...

- Have you been taking this sedative-hypnotic drug for a while?
- Are you tired and often sleepy during the day?
- Do you ever feel as if you have a hangover in the morning, even though you have not been drinking?
- Do you ever have problems with your memory or your balance?

Other options

You can make other lifestyle changes that can help with your sleeping issues: for example:

- Exercising regularly during the day.
- Avoiding caffeine, tobacco products, or alcohol, especially close to bedtime.
- Avoiding the use of any screen devices (e.g., cell phones, video games, TV watching) at bedtime.
- Using relaxation/meditation techniques at bedtime.
- Using the bedroom only for sleeping and sex.