

Sedatives

Q. Why should I read this?

A. You may want to read this if you or a member of your family is suffering from, for example, sleeping difficulties or an anxiety disorder or is taking a sedative.

Q. Why am I being given this medication?

A. Doctors can prescribe sedatives for anxiety, panic, or sleeping difficulties. They may also be prescribed for acute agitation.

Q. What about Counselling or Therapy?

A. Discuss this with your doctor as either counselling or therapy may be enough for you. However, in some cases, your doctor may recommend the use of a sedative as an important component of your treatment.

Q. Do sedatives work?

A. Studies show that sedatives can be effective in most people that take them. They must be taken as prescribed by your doctor or as instructed in the Patient Information Leaflet.

Q. Will I get addicted to sedatives?

A. This is difficult to answer. Generally speaking, there is a certain risk that people can get addicted to some sedatives, particularly with long-term use.

Q. How long do they take to work, and how long will they work?

A. Sedatives usually start working shortly after taking them. Different sedatives work for different periods of time, ranging from 2 hours to 12 hours.

Q. When can I stop?

A. It is important to discuss this with your doctor. Sedatives must only be stopped as instructed by your doctor.

Q. Sometimes I hear or read or see that sedatives can be 'bad' for you and I feel like stopping the sedative. What should I do?

A. If you have any concerns about the sedative that you are taking then go and speak to the doctor that gave you the medication or your pharmacist. They may be able to put your mind at rest by putting the risk of taking the sedative and not taking it into context.

Q. What side effects do they have?

A. Different sedatives have different side effects. For side effects about the medication you are taking please see the Patient Information Leaflet that came with your sedative medication, or if you are an inpatient in hospital then ask a member of staff for a copy of the Patient Information Leaflet. Sedatives can impair your level of alertness, so avoid driving or doing other tasks or activities that require you to be alert or have clear vision until you see how this medicine affects you. Many sedatives need to be reduced slowly before stopping, so make sure you discuss this with your doctor.

Q. Will I experience any side effects stopping treatment with my sedative?

A. Stopping certain sedatives is associated with withdrawal symptoms. The best thing to do is to ask your doctor or pharmacist, or read your Patient Information Leaflet so to know how best to stop your sedative.

Q. What if I am pregnant or trying for a baby?

A. Please consult your doctor if you are or think you are pregnant or are nursing and on a sedative.

Q. Can I get a sedative if I am under 18 years of age?

A. In general, sedatives should only be prescribed to those under the age of 18 years by a qualified medical specialist.

Please keep out of the reach of small children

Q. Can I drink alcohol when I am taking sedatives?

A. Alcohol interacts with the sedative effects of your medication, and is generally not recommended when you use sedatives. Please consult the Patient Information Leaflet and if needs be discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.

Q. What causes anxiety?

A. Anxiety is thought to be caused by a variety of social, psychological and biological factors such as a chemical imbalance (of serotonin or noradrenaline) in the brain.

Q. What causes sleeping difficulties?

A. Sleeping difficulties can have many causes, which can be psychological or physical or both. It is important to talk to your doctor so he or she can help you find out more about your problem and find the treatment that suits you best.

Q. How do sedatives work?

A. A popular theory is that sedatives may work by simulating the effect of calming chemicals within the brain.

Q. What types of sedatives exist?

A. Benzodiazepines (for example: diazepam, alprazolam, temazepam, lorazepam), imidazopyridines (zolpidem), and cyclopyrrolones (zopiclone) are three the most commonly prescribed sedatives.

Q. Where can I get more information about sedatives?

A. Your doctor, pharmacist or the following websites:

www.imb.ie

www.medicines.ie

www.yourmentalhealth.ie

www.shineonline.ie

www.aware.ie

www.grow.ie

In addition, the Patient Information Leaflet that comes with your medication contains important and useful information about the medications you may be taking.