

# Zolpidem for Restless Legs Syndrome

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide you with some information about zolpidem, which has been prescribed to treat your Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS).

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is zolpidem?

Zolpidem belongs to a group of medicines called Z drugs. It is used to treat insomnia or poor sleep. It works by acting on the way messages are sent in your brain, which help you to sleep. It reduces the time it takes for you to fall asleep and increases the length of time you spend sleeping. Zolpidem can be used to reduce the difficulty in getting off to sleep which may be associated with RLS.

## Taking an unlicensed medicine

The use of zolpidem for RLS is unlicensed which means that although the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way, there is evidence that it works to treat this particular condition. The leaflet, **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients**, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively you can call the pharmacy medicines helpline – contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

## How do I take the medicine?

For the treatment of insomnia associated with RLS, zolpidem should be taken by once daily at night. It should be swallowed whole with a glass of water. Keep taking the medicine until your doctor tells you otherwise. Stopping suddenly can cause problems and your doctor will want you to reduce your dose gradually if you need to stop treatment.

## What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you forget to take the dose before you fall asleep, do not worry. Take the next dose when it is due. **Do not take an extra dose the following evening to make up for a missed dose.**

## Are there any side effects?

The following are examples of some of the side effects reported by patients taking zolpidem. **For further information on side effects, please see the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medicine.**

Side effect (What is it?)	What should I do if it happens?
Common	
Feeling sleepy or tired	If you continue to feel sleepy the morning after, do not drive or use tools or machines until your reactions have returned to normal.
Feeling dizzy	If you begin to feel dizzy, lie down so that you do not faint, then sit for a few moments before standing. This usually passes as your body gets used to the tablets, but in the meantime do not drive or use tools or machines.
Headache	Take your usual painkiller e.g. paracetamol.
A bitter or metallic aftertaste, dry mouth	Suck sugar-free sweets.

**If any of the side effects persist or become a problem, please contact your GP/consultant or pharmacist for advice.**

## Is there anything else I need to know?

You may become dependent on zolpidem whilst taking it. Stopping abruptly may cause withdrawal symptoms such as making you feel anxious or irritable. If you have been taking it for some time and want to stop it, your doctor will recommend that you reduce your dose slowly in order to avoid the risk of these effects.

Do not drink alcohol while you are on zolpidem. It will increase the risk of side-effects such as sleepwalking and doing other things which you are unable to remember when you wake up.

Zolpidem should be kept out of reach of children. The expiry date is printed on the container. Do not use the medicine after this date. The remainder should be returned to your local pharmacy to be discarded.

## Can I take zolpidem with other medicines?

Zolpidem may interact with some medicines. It is therefore important to let us know about any medicines that you are currently taking so that we can check zolpidem is suitable for you. If you are buying any medicines over-the-counter from a pharmacy always mention that you have been prescribed clonazepam. It is safe to take ibuprofen or paracetamol with this medicine. Advice should be sought when purchasing herbal or homeopathic remedies.

## How will my treatment be reviewed?

Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and the dose adjusted accordingly in response to your symptoms.

## How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for zolpidem, which you can take to your local community pharmacy for supply.

## Useful sources of information

RLS-UK Supporting people with Restless Legs Syndrome  
<http://www.rls-uk.org/>

You might find this charity's website - [www.rls-uk.org](http://www.rls-uk.org) - useful for connecting with patients who suffer from the same condition as you but any new information found should not alter your current treatment regimen and you should discuss any new advice with the doctor caring for your condition.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder please contact the Sleep Disorder Centre on **020 7188 3430** (9am – 5pm).

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

### NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

**Leaflet number: 4428/VER1**

Date published: July 2017

Review date: July 2020

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