

Clonazepam for the treatment of non-REM parasomnias

The leaflet will give you information about taking clonazepam, which has been prescribed to treat your sleep disorder. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What are non-REM parasomnias?

Sleep is divided into two different stages: rapid eye movement (REM), where we do most of our dreaming, and non-REM (which can be divided again, into light and deep stages of sleep).

People who have non-REM parasomnias have partial awakenings from deep sleep during the night. This leads to people having abnormal, unwanted events or experiences, sometimes being able to perform complex tasks, which they may not remember as they are still partially asleep. This can include sleepwalking or experiencing sleep terrors. In extreme cases, non-REM parasomnias can cause physical injury or severe emotional upset.

What is clonazepam?

Clonazepam belongs to a group of medicines called benzodiazepines (a type of sedative). It is long-acting and should be taken regularly for the management of non-REM parasomnia. Clonazepam works by relaxing muscles, and reducing the type of sleep which non-REM parasomnias often happen in. This action can help to reduce the frequency and severity of symptoms.

Taking an unlicensed medicine

The use of clonazepam for the treatment of non-REM parasomnia is unlicensed, which means that the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way. However, 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 (details are at the end of this leaflet).

How do I take the medicine?

For the treatment of non-REM parasomnia, clonazepam should be taken at night just before bedtime. It may be taken with or without food. Swallow the tablet(s) with a drink of water.

Keep taking the tablets 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, don't 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?

In addition to their desired effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side effects although not everyone gets them. The following are examples of some of the side effects reported by patients taking clonazepam. The unwanted effects often fade as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your GP or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Side effect	What should I do if it happens?
Common (between one in 100 and one in 10)	
Feeling sleepy, weak, or light-headed (these can continue into the following day)	Take dose immediately before bedtime. Do not drive or use tools or machines. Do not drink alcohol.
Feeling unsteady, poor co-ordination, unusual eye movements, poor concentration, feeling forgetful or confused	If any of these become troublesome, discuss them with your doctor.
Uncommon (between one in 1,000 and one in 100)	
Mood changes, or changes in behaviour	If this becomes troublesome, speak with your doctor.

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

Is there anything else I need to know?

Clonazepam can make you feel sleepy, especially when you first start treatment.

Do not drink alcohol while you are taking clonazepam. Mixing alcohol with clonazepam may be dangerous as it can reduce your breathing rate, and it increases the risk of other side effects. People who have obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) should only use clonazepam alongside treatment for their OSA.

Clonazepam can lead to the development of dependence. This means that your body becomes dependent on the medicine and you may experience symptoms such as sweating, tremor, restlessness and agitation amongst others if you suddenly stop the medication. If you are concerned about this, you should discuss it with your doctor.

If you are a driver, please be aware that clonazepam may affect your reactions and ability to drive. It is an offence to drive while your reactions are impaired. Even if your driving ability is not impaired, if you drive, you are advised to carry some evidence with you which shows that the medicine has been prescribed for you – a repeat prescription form or the patient information leaflet from the packet is generally considered suitable.

If you are due to have an operation or any dental treatment, please tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking clonazepam, as it increases the effects of some anaesthetics.

Clonazepam should be kept out of reach of children. If anyone other than you takes this medicine, you, they, or their parent/carer should contact NHS 111 for advice. If they are unwell, they should call for an ambulance.

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.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding:

We do not recommend the use of this medicine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. You should let your consultant know if you are planning a pregnancy so that a management plan can be agreed. If you discover that you are pregnant, please contact your consultant for advice as soon as possible.

Sleep hygiene: Taking clonazepam is not a replacement for a good sleep routine. It is still important to aim to get around seven to eight hours of sleep at night if possible. It is advisable to go to bed when tired, and get up at about the same time each day.

Can I take clonazepam with other medicines?

Clonazepam may interact with some medicines. It is important to let us know about any medicines that you are currently taking, so that we can check clonazepam 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. Seek advice from a pharmacist when buying herbal or homeopathic remedies.

How will my treatment be reviewed?

Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and the dose adjusted depending on your symptoms.

How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for clonazepam which you can take to your local pharmacy for supply. Should your GP not prescribe melatonin for you, please contact the Sleep Disorders Centre for advice. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early enough to prevent you running out, or missing, any doses of your medication.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder, please contact the Sleep Disorders Centre, **t:** 020 7188 3430, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Out of hours, please leave a message and a member of staff will call you back in working hours, or contact your GP or NHS 111.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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

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