

INSOMNIA

Information for patients

"My doctor wants to reduce and stop my sleeping tablets - why?"

Over recent years GPs have become concerned about patients taking tranquillising medication such as zopiclone and diazepam over long periods.

In the past they were thought to be safe and so were prescribed quite frequently. However there is now clear evidence that they are not safe and they are highly addictive. Therefore guidelines suggest that they should only be prescribed in exceptional circumstances for short periods of time.

What are the risks?

1. The body 'gets used to the tablet' so that they no longer work properly. You may need higher doses to have the same effect. This is called tolerance
2. If you stop taking the tablets suddenly you may experience unpleasant withdrawal effects including anxiety, depression, impaired concentration, abdominal pain, palpitations and insomnia leading your body to believe that you 'need' the tablets. This is called dependence
3. If used long-term they can actually increase anxiety and sleeplessness
4. Drowsiness and poor reaction times which can affect driving and other day to day activities
5. Memory problems
6. Increased falls risk leading to hip fracture and other injuries

So even if you have been taking these medications for years we would still advise that you try to reduce and stop the medications with our support. We understand that the thought of this can be very worrying.

Please do not stop your medication suddenly. We would be delighted to discuss a plan with you to slowly reduce your medication over time. This may take a few months but we strongly believe that you will feel better in the long run. Please make an appointment with your own GP.

Where can I get more information on insomnia?

www.patient.info

www.nhs.uk

GP Partners, Norton Brook Surgery