

## Medication: Zolpidem 5 mg or 10 mg

### What is Zolpidem?

Zolpidem belongs to a family of medications called “Z-drugs” and is a hypnotic sleeping pill that works on the brain to cause sleepiness- particularly they aid in falling asleep. The effect typically only lasts about 3 hours so it may not be helpful in keeping you asleep. **This drug should not be used for more than 2 weeks because of the risk of rebound insomnia (even more difficult to fall asleep than before starting the medication). There is a risk of addiction to zolpidem.**

### Expected Benefit:

- A benefit can be noticed on the first night
- Over time, the drug loses its effectiveness and patients may require higher doses for effect. This is not recommended.

### Watch for possible side effects:

It is important to be aware of side effects however, it is also important to remember that not all side effects occur in everyone. Many of the less serious side effects will improve over the first few days of taking the medication.

If you have problems with these side effects talk with your doctor or pharmacist:

- Dizziness
- Off balance
- Blurred vision
- Rarely, some individuals will still feel drowsy the next morning
- Rarely, some individuals will feel agitated instead of drowsy

### Stopping the medication:

When you stop taking zolpidem, your doctor may advise you to reduce the dose slowly to help prevent your sleep problems from returning. Z-drugs like zolpidem can result in rebound insomnia after stopping if used for longer than 2 weeks. They should not be used on a regular basis for long periods of time.

### How to use this medication:

- Take this medication with or without food

### Dosing Schedule:

- Take just before bedtime because it has a quick onset of action
- Start with ½ tablet at bedtime (i.e., 2.5 mg or 5 mg depending on whether you are prescribed a 5 mg or 10 mg tablet)
- Increase the dose by ½ a tablet every night or two until you can fall asleep within 20 – 30 minutes
- The usual effective dose is 2.5 mg – 10 mg at bedtime

**Drugs and Foods to Avoid:**

Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using any other medication, including non-prescription medication (over-the-counter medication) and herbal products.

- Avoid alcohol use at the same time
- Avoid use of: St John's Wort, kava kava, gotu kola, valerian

**Tips:**

- If you are feeling sleepy or tired the morning after, **do not** drive, use tools, or operate machinery until your reactions have returned to normal
- If you experience a bitter, metallic aftertaste or dry mouth try chewing sugarless gum or sugar-free sweets

Please contact the Complex Chronic Diseases Program if you have further questions about your medications.