

The Carlat Guide to Medications Commonly Used for Insomnia

Medications	Usual Dose Range (mg)	Half-Life (in hours)	Side Effects
Benzodiazepines			
Alprazolam (Xanax)	0.5 mg–1 mg	11–16	Side effects vary, but the most common among the benzodiazepines are lightheadedness, cognitive impairment, tolerance, dependence, and withdrawal upon discontinuation
Clonazepam (Klonopin)	0.5 mg–1 mg	20–80	More likely to cause next day sedation
Lorazepam (Ativan)	0.5 mg–1 mg	10–20	
Temazepam (Restoril)*	15 mg–30 mg	8–20	
Non-benzodiazepines			
Eszopiclone (Lunesta) ^{1*}	1 mg–3 mg	5–7	Dry mouth, unpleasant taste
Zaleplon (Sonata)*	5 mg–20 mg	1	Least likely to cause next day sedation
Zolpidem (Ambien)*	5 mg–10 mg	1.5–2.4	Most frequently reported for all in this class are headache, next day sedation, dizziness, and nausea; zolpidem can cause sleep-related “complex behaviors” (eg, preparing and eating food, making phone calls, or having sex) all of which have been reported in patients who are not fully awake after taking a hypnotic
Zolpidem extended release (Ambien CR)*	6.25 mg–12.5 mg	1.5–2.4	See zolpidem
Antidepressants			
Amitriptyline (Elavil)	10 mg–25 mg	10–26	Weight gain, next day sedation, constipation, cognitive impairment

Doxepin (Silenor) ^{1*}	3 mg–6 mg	15.3 (terminal) ²	Next day sedation, nausea
Mirtazepine (Remeron)	15 mg–30 mg	20–40	Next day sedation, weight gain
Trazodone (Desyrel)	25 mg–100 mg	3–6 (first phase), 5–9 (second phase)	Next day sedation, orthostatic hypotension, priapism
Other Medications			
Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)	25 mg–50 mg	3.4–9.2	Dry mouth, next day sedation, memory impairment
Melatonin	0.3–5 mg	30 minutes to 2 hours	Headache
Quetiapine (Seroquel)	25 mg–50 mg	6	Weight gain, next day sedation, elevated cholesterol/triglycerides; risk of TD/EPS; use as hypnotic controversial due to expense and side effects
Ramelteon (Rozerem) ^{1*}	8 mg	1.5–5	Headache, next day sedation, dizziness

Many other medications are sometimes used to treat insomnia. We have only listed those most commonly used here. *FDA-approved for insomnia. 1 No long-term use limitation. All other medications in the table are DEA Class C-IV. (These drugs are considered highly abusable.) 2 Half-life of doxepin does not correspond to length of sedation

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