

Fact Sheet

A reduction plan for your sleeping tablets



From your health professional

Patient education material

For: _____ (patient name)

Your doctor will plan with you how to stop your sleeping tablets. You may need to stop gradually so it is easier to get used to being without the medicine.

Sleeping tablets

Sleeping tablets may be helpful in the short term in some situations. However, they can disturb the normal rhythm of your sleep, so it won't be as deep or restful. Ideally, they should be used for 2 weeks or less and only when required.

They can cause unwanted effects like daytime drowsiness, dizziness, problems with balance (this can increase your risk of falls), memory loss, poor concentration and weak bladder (incontinence).

Sleeping tablets can be addictive and stopping them becomes more difficult the longer you use them.

Stopping your sleeping tablets can improve your memory, daytime alertness and quality of sleep, and can reduce your risk of falls.

Not everyone stops taking their sleeping tablets the first time they try. If this happens, it's worthwhile trying again when you're ready.

Alternatives to medicines

Learn and practise techniques to help you relax and sleep. Your doctor can help you learn, or suggest courses.

Withdrawal symptoms

You may experience withdrawal symptoms. Not everyone has the same symptoms and the amount of discomfort caused by these varies.

Symptoms may include poor concentration, dizziness, muscle pains, tremors ('the shakes'), and feeling irritable, restless,

anxious or depressed. You may also notice that your difficulty sleeping returns when you start reducing your tablets. This generally lasts for 1 – 3 days and does not mean that you still need your sleeping tablets.

Your doctor will help you manage withdrawal symptoms or sleeping difficulties if these occur.

Helpful hints when reducing your sleeping tablets

- ▶ Start your reduction plan when you are not feeling stressed.
- ▶ Keep in regular contact with your doctor to discuss how you are dealing with reducing your sleeping tablets.
- ▶ Find a supporter (e.g. a friend or relative who is a good listener).
- ▶ Try not to drink alcohol, or keep the amount you drink to a minimum. Drinking alcohol during this time may make your withdrawal symptoms worse (see over).

At the start, have a review with your doctor once weekly

- ▶ A successful reduction plan can take several weeks to months.
- ▶ Discuss with your doctor how you can manage any changes in your mood, sleep, alcohol use, or amount you smoke, which may occur when reducing your sleeping tablets.
- ▶ Record which tablets you have taken and when (see over).
- ▶ Record any symptoms you may have and discuss these with your doctor.
- ▶ Keep a diary of the times you sleep, and for how long (you can download a sleep diary from www.nps.org.au/sleep).

Your reduction plan

(Your doctor may change this depending on your symptoms)

Medicine name and strength: _____

To be completed by the doctor:

Indicate the number of tablets/capsules to be taken

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1 beginning / /							
Week 2 beginning / /							
Week 3 beginning / /							
Week 4 beginning / /							
Week 5 beginning / /							
Week 6 beginning / /							
Week 7 beginning / /							
Week 8 beginning / /							

Date of follow-up appointments: _____

To be completed by the patient:

Record the number of tablets/capsules taken

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1 beginning / /							
Week 2 beginning / /							
Week 3 beginning / /							
Week 4 beginning / /							
Week 5 beginning / /							
Week 6 beginning / /							
Week 7 beginning / /							
Week 8 beginning / /							

Name of your support person: _____

Record any withdrawal symptoms you experience (see over)



Sleep right Sleep tight

For more information go to: www.nps.org.au/topics/sleep_campaign or scan the QR Code

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