

# AMBIEN

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If you have insomnia, which means you have trouble sleeping, you may be prescribed Ambien. You may also be familiar with its generic name, Zolpidem. Ambien is a high alert medication, which means if you do not take it exactly as prescribed it may cause illness or injury.

To understand how Ambien works, let's look at what happens in your body when you are trying to sleep.

Your brain is constantly firing information and messages to the rest of your body, telling you what to think, what to feel and what to do. When you are ready to sleep, the messages being fired in your brain slow down allowing you to fall asleep. But when you have insomnia, your brain cannot slow down the messages, and you stay awake.

Ambien enhances a chemical in the brain called GABA, which helps calm down the signals that are firing in your brain so you can fall asleep.

Ambien comes in a fast-acting tablet, or an extended release tablet that will help you both, fall asleep, and stay asleep. Your healthcare provider will decide how much you need to take and how best to take it.

Ambien is a powerful medication. Some people should not take it. Do not take Ambien if you are allergic to the ingredients in it.

If you are pregnant, planning to get pregnant, or breastfeeding, tell your healthcare provider before taking Ambien. A different medication may be safer for you and your baby.

Before taking Ambien, tell your healthcare provider if you have a history of: kidney disease, liver disease, asthma or other breathing problems, sleep apnea, or depression.

Ambien can be highly addictive. If you have a history of abuse of: street drugs, prescription medications or alcohol, tell your healthcare provider. There may be a different medication available for you.

Before taking Ambien, give your healthcare provider a complete list of all other medications you use, including vitamins and herbal supplements.

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Some side effects of Ambien include: feeling tired in the daytime, dizziness, weakness, feeling lightheaded, stuffy nose, dry mouth, constipation, diarrhea, headache and muscle pain. If you do notice any of these side effects, contact your healthcare provider about how to manage them.

Be aware that you are at an increased risk of falling while taking Ambien. Get up from a sitting or lying position slowly.

Sometimes the medication can remain at a high enough level in the morning to impact you. Make sure you are fully awake before you drive or operate heavy machinery, including your car, while taking Ambien.

Do not take Ambien if you have had alcohol within the past 6 hours.

When taking Ambien, you may do things you don't remember doing, such as sleep eating or sleep walking. Women and the elderly are more likely to experience these effects. If this happens to you, stop taking Ambien and call your healthcare provider.

If you have an allergic reaction like: trouble breathing, hives, or swelling of your face or throat; call 911.

If you have: chest pain, fast or irregular heartbeat, trouble breathing, trouble swallowing, or if you feel like you may pass out; call your healthcare provider right away.

This is not the complete list of side effects. Make sure you discuss all possible side effects with your healthcare provider.

Take Ambien exactly as prescribed. Do not change your dose or take it for longer than prescribed.

When taking an Ambien extended release tablet, always swallow the tablet whole with plenty of water. Do not cut, break, chew, crush or dissolve this medication.

Ambien is usually taken 30 to 60 minutes before bed. Make sure you get a full 7 to 8 hours of sleep when taking it.

Do not double dose. If you think you have taken too much Ambien, call 911. An overdose can lead to death.

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Store Ambien away from moisture and direct sunlight. Your bathroom medicine cabinet is not the best place because of moisture. Do not leave your medication where it could get too hot or too cold. Always store your medication out of sight and out of reach of children to prevent accidents.

When you are done taking Ambien tablets, crush all of your remaining pills and mix them with undesirable trash like kitty litter or coffee grounds.

Do not sell or give your Ambien to anyone else. It is against the law and can seriously harm anyone else taking it. Contact your local police station for more information on proper disposal directions.

Ambien can help you get the sleep you need. But it is a powerful medication that should only be taken exactly as prescribed. If you have any questions about Ambien, ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist for more information.