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If you have insomnia, which means you have trouble sleeping, you may be prescribed Lunesta. You may also be familiar with its generic name, Eszopiclone. Lunesta 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 Lunesta 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.

Lunesta 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.

Lunesta comes in a tablet. Doses come in either; 1 mg, 2 mg, or 3 mg tablets. Do not take more than 3 mg of Lunesta at one time. Your healthcare provider will decide how much you need to take and how best to take it.

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

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

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

Lunesta 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 Lunesta, 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 Lunesta include: feeling tired in the daytime, dizziness, poor concentration, trouble with memory, anxiety, depression, nausea, constipation, dry mouth, headache, mild skin rash and an unpleasant taste in your mouth.

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 Lunesta. Get up from a sitting or lying position slowly.

Make sure you are fully awake before you drive or operate heavy machinery, including your car, while taking Lunesta.

Be aware that alcohol can increase some side effects of Lunesta.

When taking Lunesta, you may do things you don't remember doing such as sleep eating or sleep walking. If this happens to you, stop taking Lunesta 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: hallucinations, mood or behavior changes, or thoughts of hurting yourself or others; 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 Lunesta exactly as prescribed. Do not change your dose or take it for longer than prescribed.

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

If you miss a dose, take your Lunesta as soon as possible. Do not double dose. If you think you have taken too much Lunesta, call 911. An overdose can lead to death.

Store Lunesta 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.

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Always store your medication out of sight and out of reach of children to prevent accidents.

When you are done taking Lunesta 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 Lunesta 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.

Lunesta 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 Lunesta, ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist for more information.