

Ambien (zolpidem) basics

Helps you sleep. Ambien (zolpidem) aids in falling asleep and staying asleep, but it can be habit-forming and might be more likely than other sleep medicines to cause side effects.

What to expect when starting

Here's when people typically experience benefits as well as some possible side effects. Your experience may be different.



* Placebo is a sugar pill with no medicinal benefit.

† Data on frequency of side effects is not available.

Tips from pharmacists

- Take 30 to 45 minutes before bedtime.
- Only take it if you have time to sleep for at least 8 hours.
- Can be addictive. Meant for short-term treatment. Dependence can form after daily use for 2 weeks.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs when taking Ambien (zolpidem).
- Withdrawal symptoms can occur if you abruptly stop the drug and you've been regularly using it. The symptoms usually resolve in 1 to 2 nights.
- Report any confusion or changes in thoughts or behavior.

Risks and warnings

Contact your doctor if you experience any of these.

Dependence and withdrawal

All prescription sleep-aid medicines in the same category as Ambien (zolpidem) have a risk of physical dependence. Dependence means that you'll feel withdrawal symptoms if you stop taking the medication all at once. Talk to your doctor about natural ways to improve sleep or treat underlying conditions that prevent sleep.

Driving impairment

Ambien (zolpidem) impairs your ability to focus, think, and react. These effects can extend to the morning after taking Ambien (zolpidem). Be careful and avoid activities that require you to be alert, such as driving a car or operating machinery, until you know how this medication affects you.

Abnormal thoughts

Ambien (zolpidem) can cause bizarre behavior, agitation, and hallucinations. Tell your doctor if you notice any unusual changes in behavior.