The Medical Letter®

On Drugs and Therapeutics

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IN BRIEF

Lowering the Dose of *Lunesta*

The FDA has required the manufacturer of eszopiclone (*Lunesta* – Sunovion), a benzodiazepine receptor agonist approved for the treatment of insomnia, to lower the current recommended starting dose to 1 mg for both men and women because a new study found that an evening dose of 3 mg can impair driving skills, memory, and coordination for more than 11 hours.[1] Eszopiclone's half-life is longer than that of any other drug in its class, which includes zolpidem (*Ambien*, and generics) and zaleplon (*Sonata*, and generics).

All benzodiazepine receptor agonists may impair performance the next morning, including driving.[2] Anterograde amnesia and complex sleep-related behaviors without conscious awareness may also occur. Hallucinations have been reported. Like the benzodiazepines, benzodiazepine receptor agonists are schedule IV controlled substances; withdrawal, dependence, and abuse can occur.

1. FDA Drug Safety Communication. FDA warns of next-day impairment with sleep aid Lunesta (eszopiclone) and lowers recommended dose. Available at www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm397260.htm. Accessed May 29, 2014.
2. Drugs for insomnia. Treat Guidel Med Lett 2012; 10:57.

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