



Our Recommendations

Insomnia is a common problem. About 10% to 15% of adults have persistent problems falling or staying asleep. And a third report at least one episode of insomnia per year. A variety of sleeping pills are available, including four newer prescription drugs that have been heavily promoted to doctors and consumers in recent years.

To help you and your doctor choose the sleeping pill that is right for you – if you need one – *Consumer Reports* has evaluated the drugs in this category based on their effectiveness, safety, and cost. This 2-page brief is a summary of a 17-page report you can access on the Internet at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org. You can also learn about other drugs we've analyzed on this free Web site. Our independent evaluations are based on scientific reviews conducted by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. Grants from the Engelberg Foundation and National Library of Medicine help fund *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*.

DO YOU NEED A SLEEPING PILL?

Sleeping pills can be quite helpful if you have short-term insomnia for a few nights. They reduce the time it takes you to get to sleep, and they help you stay asleep. But sleeping pills are not a long-term solution for people who suffer frequent bouts of insomnia or who have trouble sleeping most nights. Such people should see a physician, preferably a sleep specialist, and be treated with behavioral techniques.

Sleeping pills should be taken more judiciously and less often than appears to be the current pattern of use by millions of people in the U.S. There are two main reasons for this advice:

- People with only mild insomnia may be relying too heavily on pills and not trying to address their sleep problems with non-drug measures.
- All sedatives have side effects and can cause dependency. The side effects include daytime sleepiness, cognitive impairment, dizziness, unsteadiness, and rebound insomnia. Sleep-walking, sleep-driving, memory lapses, and hallucinations have also been reported.

The four newer drugs used to treat insomnia – zolpidem (Ambien and Ambien CR), eszopiclone (Lunesta), ramelteon (Rozerem), and zaleplon (Sonata) – are effective but not necessarily any better than older, less expensive drugs for many people who need a sleep aid for a night or two. Nonprescription drugs containing antihistamines – such as Nytol and Tylenol – and older sedatives called benzodiazepines may work just as well.

People with persistent, chronic insomnia – three or more nights a week for months on end – should seek out behavioral therapy that improves sleep habits, and use sleeping pills cautiously.

If you and your doctor have decided that you need one of the newer pills, we have chosen zolpidem (Ambien) as the *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug*, based primarily on the fact that it will soon become a less expensive generic. Fifteen doses of Ambien now costs around \$58. When generic zolpidem becomes available that price should decline by 50% to 70%.

This information was last updated in August 2006

Effectiveness and Differences – The Newer Sedative Drugs

Drug and Year it Went on Market	Helps You Fall Asleep?	Average Time to Fall Asleep ¹	Helps You Stay Asleep?	Percent With Next-Day Drowsiness ¹	Risk of Rebound Insomnia? ²	Risk of Dependency
Ambien (1992)	Yes	33 to 46 minutes	Yes	2%-3%	Yes	Yes
Ambien CR (2005)	Yes	NA	Yes	15%	Yes	Yes
Lunesta (2004)	Yes	50 minutes	Yes	8% to 10%	Yes	Yes
Rozerem (2005)	Yes	75 minutes	No information	5%	No	No
Sonata (1999)	Yes	36 to 55 minutes	Evidence weaker than for Ambien and Lunesta	5%-6%	No	Yes

1. As assessed in one major study or several studies. Figures do not imply that the drugs were compared to each other in one study with consistent design.

2. Rebound insomnia occurs when you stop taking a sleeping pill and the insomnia gets worse. The risk of rebound insomnia is generally small, though some people are vulnerable. When experienced, it usually goes away in a few days.

Costs of Selected Insomnia Drugs¹

Generic Name	Brand Name	Is a Generic Drug?	Average Cost for 7 Doses ²	Average Cost for 15 Doses ²
Newer Sedatives				
CR BEST BUY Zolpidem tablet 10mg tablet	Ambien	No ³	\$27	\$57
CR BEST BUY Zolpidem tablet 5mg tablet	Ambien	No ³	\$27	\$58
Zolpidem 6.25mg sustained release	Ambien CR	No	\$28	\$59
Zolpidem 12.5mg sustained release	Ambien CR	No	\$28	\$59
Eszopiclone 1mg tablet	Lunesta	No	\$30	\$65
Eszopiclone 2mg tablet	Lunesta	No	\$30	\$65
Eszopiclone 3mg tablet	Lunesta	No	\$30	\$65
Ramelteon 8mg tablet	Rozerem	No	\$24	\$51
Zaleplon 5mg capsule	Sonata	No	\$25	\$53
Zaleplon 10mg capsule	Sonata	No	\$29	\$62
Selected Antidepressant				
Trazodone 50mg	Desyrel	No	\$18	\$39
Trazodone 100mg	Desyrel	No	\$29	\$62
Trazodone 150mg	Desyrel	No	\$28	\$60
Trazodone 50mg	Generic	Yes	\$3	\$6
Trazodone 100mg	Generic	Yes	\$3	\$7
Trazodone 150mg	Generic	Yes	\$5	\$12
Selected Benzodiazepines⁴				
Estazolam 2mg tablet	ProSom	No	\$14	\$30
Estazolam 2mg tablet	Generic	Yes	\$7	\$15
Flurazepam 15mg capsule	Dalmane	No	\$13	\$28
Flurazepam 15mg capsule	Generic	Yes	\$3	\$6
Lorazepam 1mg tablet	Ativan	No	\$11	\$25
Lorazepam 1mg tablet	Generic	Yes	\$4	\$9
Quazepam 15mg tablet	Doral	No	\$35	\$75
Temazepam 7.5mg capsule	Restoril	No	\$26	\$55
Temazepam 7.5mg capsule	Generic	Yes	\$7	\$14
Triazolam 0.25mg tablet	Halcion	No	\$13	\$28
Triazolam 0.25mg tablet	Generic	Yes	\$5	\$11

UNDERSTANDING GENERICS: A generic drug is one that is sold under its generic name. For example in this table, estazolam is the generic name and ProSom is the brand name. Generics are less expensive. If you are prescribed a brand name drug that is available as a generic, ask your doctor or pharmacist if switching would be appropriate.

1. Because of space limitations, not all sleeping pills are listed. For a more comprehensive list, you can obtain the full 17-page report for free at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org.
2. Recommended use is one pill at bedtime. The prices given are based on per pill costs. Prices reflect nationwide retail average for January 2006, rounded to the nearest dollar. Prices are derived by *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Health, Pharmaceutical Audit Suite.
3. Ambien is scheduled to become available as a generic in October 2006.
4. Those approved by the FDA for treating insomnia. Selected doses only.