**Kilsyth Medical Partnership**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Dr A McGregor*** | Kilsyth Community Health Centre | ***Dr K Finlay*** |
| ***Dr M Hudson*** | Airdrie Road, Kilsyth | ***Dr N Howland*** |
| ***Dr A McSherry*** | Glasgow G659JE | ***Dr C Lilly*** |
| ***Dr E Stafford*** | Tel: 01236 801677 | ***Dr R MacInnes*** |
|  | Fax: 01236 828229 |  |
|  | www.kilsythmedicalpartnership.scot.nhs.uk |  |

**Patient information leaflet: Sleeping Tablets**

The following advice applies to people prescribed benzodiazepines (Temazepam) or “Z” drugs (Zolpidem and Zopiclone).

**GPs now rarely prescribe sleeping pills to treat insomnia. Sleeping pills can have serious side effects and you can become dependent on them.**

**Why are doctors reluctant to prescribe sleeping tablets?**

• Sleeping tablets may cause significant problems, which include:

• Drowsiness and clumsiness. People taking sleeping tablets are known to have more accidents (e.g. falls and car-related incidents), therefore it may not be safe to drive or operate machinery. Older people taking sleeping tablets have an increased risk of falling and sustaining bone fractures (e.g. hip injury).

• Mood and mental changes. Some people can become aggressive, confused, forgetful or depressed.

• Dependence and tolerance. Your body may rapidly get used to the effect of sleeping tablets; hence they may fail to help if you keep taking them. Some people may become addicted to sleeping tablets (i.e. dependence problems), which implies that withdrawal symptoms will occur if the drug is stopped suddenly. Typical withdrawal symptoms include anxiety, panic attacks, sweating, headaches and shaking. Other symptoms may include the inability to sleep, sickness or being oversensitive to light and sound. What is the alternative to sleeping tablets?

• Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist can give you advice on how to tackle poor sleep without drug intervention. Some useful advice is given below:

**The good sleep guide -** *Establish a regular sleep pattern*

• Set the alarm for the same time every morning for seven days a week, at least until your sleep pattern settles down.

• Get up at the same time every day, even if you did not fall asleep until late.

• Do not sleep during the day.

• During the evening ensure you “put the day to rest”. Think it through and use a notebook if necessary. Tie up “loose ends” in your mind and plan ahead.

• Try to keep yourself fit by performing light exercise in the late afternoon or early evening (later than this can disturb your sleep).

• Have a regular routine before sleep, whereby you wind down during the course of the evening and avoid anything that is mentally demanding within 90 minutes of bedtime.

• Keep your sleep for bedtime (i.e. avoid falling asleep or snoozing in the armchair).

• Do not drink too much caffeinated substances (e.g. coffee, tea and certain soft drinks) and only have a light snack for supper. Try decaffeinated milk-based or herbal beverages.

• Do not drink alcohol to aid your sleep. It may help you fall asleep, but you will almost certainly wake up during the night.

• Make sure your bed is comfortable and the bedroom is not too cold (but not too warm) and is quiet (use earplugs if necessary).

***At bedtime***

• Go to bed when you are “sleepy tired” and not before.

• Do not read or watch TV in bed.

• Turn the lights off when you get into bed.

• Relax and tell yourself that “sleep will come when it’s ready”. Enjoy relaxing even if you don’t fall asleep at first.

• Do not try to fall asleep. Sleep cannot be switched on deliberately but attempting to do so may switch it off!

***If you have problems getting to sleep***

• Try not to get upset or frustrated as sleep problems are quite common and they are not as damaging as you might think.

• If you are awake in bed for more than 20 minutes, get up and go into another room. Do something relaxing for a while and don’t worry about tomorrow. Read, watch television or listen to quiet music and after a while you should feel tired enough to go to bed again.

• Remember that people usually cope quite well even after a sleepless night. Only return to bed when you feel “sleepy tired”.

• Establishing a good sleep pattern may take a number of weeks, however you should remain confident that you will achieve it by working through this guide.

You can find useful information below:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/insomnia/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>