

Getting Off Your Sleep Medication

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Some patients have been told to take their sleep medication every other night. All this does is guarantee you will have a terrible sleep every other night. Some Doctors will suddenly stop prescribing sleep medication when they feel the patient has been taking them for too long. Of course, neither of these approaches result in good sleep.

Weaning off your sleeping medication while still maintaining good sleep requires that you first establish two things:

First you need to consolidate and deepen your sleep by creating good, consistent sleep habits as outlined here on [The Principles and Process of Reconditioning Good Sleep](#). Then you want to expand your sleep time until you are getting enough sleep to feel fully rested.

If you are still having trouble getting enough good quality sleep you are going to be tired during the day. If you are tired, then you have to push yourself to get through the day. Pushing yourself results in an “adrenalin hangover” at the end of the day. This adrenalin hangover will make it hard to sleep without tranquilizing yourself with a sleeping pill. If you stop your sleeping pill now you will have insomnia.

However, once you have trained yourself to sleep well you can then work on getting enough sleep to feel rested. Once you are feeling rested you no longer have to push yourself through the day with adrenalin. When you no longer have an adrenalin hangover at the end of the day you no longer need your sleeping pill. Then it is fairly easy to wean off your sleeping medication without ending up with insomnia all over again.

To do this, you will gradually reduce the sleeping medication $\frac{1}{2}$ pill at a time. Even reducing the pill gradually may result in some withdrawal effects which can make it more difficult to fall and stay asleep. Having trouble sleeping could upset your sleep conditioning and lead to insomnia all over again. To counteract the reduced sleepiness from medication withdrawal, you will also go to bed 2 hours later for 5 nights. The extra sleepiness from going to bed later will counteract the reduced sleepiness from medication withdrawal so you will still remain a good sleeper. The only thing is that you will be a little sleep deprived again. Because you were fully rested before you started this process, this amount of sleep deprivation will not

affect you nearly as much as the degree of sleep deprivation you had before you started the program.

After 5 nights of going to bed 2 hours later to get through the withdrawal process, you will now start going to bed 30 minutes earlier every 1 - 2 nights until you are back to getting the full number of hours of sleep you need to feel fully rested. Give yourself a couple of weeks to recover from this period of sleep deprivation. When you are feeling rested again you can repeat the process and stop the next half of pill.

Assuming that your sleeping pill is not causing any major side effect, there is no urgency to get off the medication. It is possible that you could get off the medication quicker than this program stipulates. However, why risk the possibility of ending up with insomnia again by setting some arbitrary deadline to get off the medication? You will get off of it soon enough by following this protocol. Make sure your sleep is good and consolidated after each reduction of the medication before going on to the next reduction. Be patient and do not rush the process.