

Side Effects of Sleep Drugs

Eating a little bit of chocolate was a treat that Teresa Wood looked forward to after work. The Fairfax Station, Va., resident allowed herself two small pieces of chocolate candy a day. But after taking a drug to help her sleep at night, Wood awoke in the morning to find an empty box on the table in place of a pound of chocolates that had been there the night before.

"I couldn't believe it," says Wood. "I started looking all around the house—I even looked under the bed. I thought for sure someone came into the house during the night and ate them." But she was alone.

A few weeks later, Wood awoke to find a near-full box of chocolates gone again. "I just don't remember eating all that candy," she says.

Complex Sleep-Related Behaviors

Wood and her doctor determined that she had been getting up during the night and "sleep eating," an occurrence known as a complex sleep-related behavior. Other behaviors include making phone calls, having sex, and getting into the car and driving while not fully awake. Most people do not remember these events later.

Complex behaviors are a potential side effect of sedative-hypnotic products—a class of drugs used to help a person fall asleep and stay asleep.



Stronger Warnings

In early 2007, the FDA requested that all manufacturers of sedative-hypnotic drug products strengthen their product labeling to

include warnings to make the risks known. The revised labeling requests were made for the following sedative-hypnotic products: Ambien, Ambien CR, Butisol, Carbrital, Dalmane, Doral, Halcion, Lunesta, Placidyl, Prosom, Restoril, Rozerem, Seconal, and Sonata.

Precautions

The FDA advises people who are treated with any of these products to take the following precautions:

- Talk to your health care provider before you start these medications and if you have any questions or concerns.
- Read the Medication Guide, when available, before taking the product.
- Do not take more than the dose prescribed by your health care provider. Complex sleep-related behaviors are more likely to occur with higher than appropriate doses.
- Do not drink alcohol or take other drugs that depress the nervous system.
- Do not discontinue the use of these medications without first talking to your health care provider.

Source: FDA

Tips for Better Sleep

1. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, even on weekends.
2. Avoid caffeine, nicotine, beer, wine, and liquor in the four to six hours before bedtime.
3. Don't exercise within two hours of bedtime.
4. Don't eat large meals within two hours of bedtime.
5. Don't nap later than 3 p.m.
6. Sleep in a dark, quiet room that isn't too hot or cold for you.
7. If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something quiet until you feel sleepy.
8. Wind down in the 30 minutes before bedtime by doing something relaxing, such as reading or listening to music.

Source: FDA Office of Women's Health

The Harshest Bill Collector You May Ever Face

It's nice to know that you can always borrow from your 401(k). But be warned: If you quit, are laid off, or fired from your job, you are probably going to have to pay that loan back immediately at a point and time that may be impossible for you to do so. If you can't repay the loan, it will be treated as an early withdrawal, which means you will owe taxes along with a 10% penalty. Think long and hard before you borrow.

\$\$\$ You Do the Math \$\$\$

If you smoke, you spend on average \$3.00 per pack of cigarettes. At a pack a day, you will save \$1,100 each year and \$11,000 in 10 years if you quit.

Something Smells Fishy: Choosing Fresh Fish

To be sure the safety of seafood is being properly preserved, only buy fish that is refrigerated or properly iced. Fish should be displayed on a thick bed of fresh ice that is not melting, and preferably in a case or under some type of cover.

- Fish should **smell fresh and mild**, not fishy, sour, or ammonia-like.
- A fish's **eyes should be clear** and bulge a little (except for a few naturally cloudy-eyed fish such as walleye pike).
- Whole fish and filets should have **firm, shiny flesh** and bright red gills free from slime. Dull flesh could mean the fish is old.
Note: Fish filets that have been previously frozen may have lost some of their shine, but they are fine to eat.
- The flesh should spring back when pressed.
- Fish filets should display **no darkening or drying** around the edges. They should have no green or yellowish discoloration, and should not appear dry or mushy in any areas.

Today, fresh catches can be processed and frozen immediately. Frequently, this takes place right on the fishing vessel. To help ensure that the frozen fish you're buying is safe, follow these guidelines:

- Don't buy frozen seafood if its package is open, torn or crushed on the edges.

- Avoid packages that are positioned above the "frost line" or top of the freezer case in the store's freezer.
- If the package cover is transparent, look for signs of frost or ice crystals. These could mean the fish has been stored a long time or thawed and refrozen - in which case, choose another package.



Quick and Easy Crusty Potato Fish Filets

6 white fish filets, about ¾-inch thick

2 eggs, beaten

½ cup fresh lemon juice

Pinch of salt

Pinch of freshly ground black pepper

1 4-oz. pouch roasted garlic mashed potatoes or regular instant potatoes

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Cover broiler pan with foil. Grease well, or spray with nonstick vegetable cooking spray. In medium bowl, beat eggs with lemon juice; add salt and pepper to egg mixture. Empty pouch of potatoes into a separate medium-sized bowl. Dip fish filets in egg mixture, then into dry potatoes, and coat both sides. Spread filets on prepared broiler pan and bake in preheated oven for 10-15 minutes, then set oven to broil and cook tops until golden brown. Makes 6 servings. Note: Filets may be grilled or sautéed in hot vegetable oil.

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