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Published on *Explorable.com* (<https://explorable.com>)

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## Sleep Medication

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Sleep medications are amongst the most widely used prescription drugs. While sleep medications are necessary sometimes, it should only be used for very short periods (a few days max - a physician should do a thorough review if longer).

Mostly, sleep medication should only be used to regain a balanced sleep pattern if none of the other suggestions work (like in this course) or in extreme cases. It is vital to consult a physician/GP/doctor before undertaking such medication.

Prolonged use of many sleep medications may work **against** recovering from a sleep problem in the long term even if many medications works great in a short term.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center. Below it, the text "Quiz Time!" is written in a cursive font. Three quiz cards are displayed in a row, each with a different image and title:

- Card 1: Image of red roller skates on a wooden deck. Title: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2".
- Card 2: Image of a fan of colorful pens. Title: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2".
- Card 3: Image of a Ferris wheel at sunset. Title: "Quiz: Flags in Europe".

To the right of the cards, there is a link: "See all quizzes =>".

## About Sleep Medication

Sleeping pills may often have a sedative effect, which means that they slow down the brain's activity, creating a calming effect; this reduces anxiety and makes it easier for a person to fall asleep. Sleep medication may also have a hypnotic effect, which refers to its ability to induce sleep directly. Purely hypnotic drugs are also called soporifics.

## Dangers of Sleep Medication

Too many people with sleep problems get prescriptions for sleep medication, for unnecessarily long periods of time. The problem is that the medications often dull the problem down, rather than solving it, which may lead to more long-term challenges.

One type prescription drug for sleep problems, which should be specifically addressed, is the benzodiazepine group. Examples of that group are Xanax, Valium, Imovane, and Sobril. This is quite a dangerous drug group that has sedative effects on the central nervous system. The problem with benzodiazepines is that these are highly addictive. If it is used for a while, many people with sleep problems that use such medication get addiction problems. Besides the addiction risk, the medication often starts to **produce** sleep problems and anxiety in the long term for the person using the medication.

Think twice before using these and similar drugs, for periods longer than a few days, as they may agitate your sleep difficulties and lead to addiction.

## Sleep Medication

Sleeping pills are indeed drugs, and strong drugs at that. Just like with most other psychoactive substances, side effects are possible. Benzodiazepines can create dependence when used for longer periods of time, or in larger quantities than what is recommended.

In some cases, they may cause drowsiness, gastrointestinal problems, slow heart rate and hypotension, nausea, loss of sex-drive, paranoia, social anxiety, depression, blurred vision, confusion, depersonalization, as well as cognitive impairments, among other maladies. Not everyone suffers those side effects, but it is still worth it to keep them in mind.

Since these are controlled medications, it goes without saying that you should be diagnosed, and the drugs should be prescribed by nobody other than a licensed, experienced professional.

## Is It Time for Drugs?

Wise physicians will recommend that even when taking sleeping pills, you need to practice sleep hygiene.

This is why the best, healthiest, decision you can make for your life and your sleep disorder, is to try everything else first (like tips elsewhere in this course), before reaching for medication. Above all, remember that sleeping pills may sedate you, but they do nothing about the reasons behind your sleep disorder. As is the case with any condition, psychological or physiological, treating the symptoms, instead of the causes, won't have a positive long-term effect.

So let's not get ahead of ourselves - you should try natural, proven psychological techniques before taking sleep medication. The CBT and relaxation techniques you have now learned can help you find the cause and remedy of your sleep issues. Sure, they will take longer to work, compared to sleeping pills, but their effects will be profound and long-lasting, which is not the case with drugs.

## Instead of Sleeping Pills

More often than not, it's your thoughts, ideas and feelings that, whether you acknowledge them or not, keep you up at night. Reflecting on the underlying cause of your sleep problems, making some behavioral changes, and learning how to relax by challenging unhelpful thinking patterns, will make a real difference.

In this way, your attitude towards life's ups and downs will become more stable, healthier, and more positive. Practicing this is a safe, yet effective approach to coping with sleep disorders, which is recommended by healthcare professionals.

If you practice what you've learned here, and yet you don't notice any positive changes in your life, we would wholeheartedly suggest that you contact a licensed and experienced psychologist, who can lend you a hand in working on what is preventing you from enjoying healthy sleep.

## **If You Decide to Taking Pills**

If you have done everything else you could, and both you and your doctor honestly think that sleeping pills are the only solution for you, perhaps because your sleep disorder is caused by a medical condition, still keep what you've learned here in mind.

We suggest a restrictive attitude to taking drugs and although they may sometimes be needed, you should make certain that you have carefully talked to your GP/doctor, before deciding to proceed with drugs.

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