

Suvorexant

Suvorexant (Belsomra) is a medication for insomnia which works by reducing orexin, a neurotransmitter that keeps people awake. Suvorexant is the first sleep medicine available which works by this mechanism.

How should I take it?

Suvorexant should be taken within 30 minutes of bedtime (it peaks after 0.5-2 hours). You do not have to take it every night; it is best taken as-needed. To avoid falls, you should get into bed and remain in bed after taking it. It can be taken with or without food but tends to come on faster if taken on an empty stomach.

How long the effects of suvorexant last will depend on the person. When first starting the medicine, make sure you have enough time to get at least 7 hours of sleep.

Side effects

Like all sleep medicines, suvorexant may impair concentration or driving in the morning. You should monitor how it effects you when first starting it. Sleep-walking behaviors are also possible. Rarely, people may see or hear things (as if dreaming while awake) after taking it. These effects may be worse if the dose is raised.

Suvorexant can suppress breathing and should be used with caution if you suffer from sleep apnea or a lung disease. Other drugs which can impair breathing, such as alcohol, opioids or other sedatives (e.g. as benzodiazepines) can worsen these effects.

Abuse and Dependence

Suvorexant is a controlled substance (schedule IV), but likely has low abuse potential as studies found that people with addiction had little or no preference for it. So far, no withdrawal problems have been found when

suvorexant is stopped after prolonged use, but more time is necessary to fully research and uncover potential dependence problems.

Drug Interactions

Diltiazem and other drugs which effect the CYP3A enzyme in the liver can increase suvorexant levels. You can check for full drug interactions at this website (please talk with us about the information you find):

reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker

Key Points

1. You should stay in bed after taking suvorexant and expect to have time for at least 7 hours of sleep when first starting it.
3. If your insurer requires authorization, contact us at auth@moodtreatmentcenter.com.

How to store and dispose of medication

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat, direct light and damp places.
- To safely dispose of unwanted pills: Do not pour in the toilet or sink (it will enter the water supply). To prevent children or pets from eating it, mix unwanted pills in a bag with water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds) and throw in the garbage.

Cost and insurance coverage

Suvorexant is not available in generic form and may require prior authorization in order for your insurer to pay for it. Please check with your pharmacist to see if prior authorization is required as this may take time for us to arrange with your insurer. We can usually provide samples while we try to secure authorization; contact us at auth@moodtreatmentcenter.com.

There may be coupons at: www.belsomra.com

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 11/25/2014

Quick facts

Brand	Belsomra
Dose range	5-20mg at night
Sizes	Tabs: 5, 10, 15, 20mg
Release date	Dec or Jan 2014 (anticipated)
FDA-approval	Insomnia