

5 QUESTIONS to ask your healthcare team about sleep in hospital and why medicines for sleep are not a good idea



1

DO I REALLY NEED THIS TREATMENT?

Treatments, such as medicines, and procedures may help to treat your problem.

No, while you can expect some sleep disturbance during your hospital stay, you shouldn't need a medicine to help you sleep. The recommended management of sleep disturbance uses a non-medicine approach, which is safer and effective.

2

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Will there be side effects to the treatment? Could that lead to extra testing or treatments?

Medicines used for sleep can lead to medical complications or worsen your current medical conditions e.g. falls, fractures, confusion and breathing difficulties, even death. The side effects can delay recovery and rehabilitation.

3

ARE THERE SIMPLER, SAFER OPTIONS?

Ask if there are alternative options to treatment that could work, such as lifestyle changes.

Yes, there are safe & effective options to help you sleep in hospital. Many patients find eye masks, earplugs, relaxation therapies and soft music useful. Ask for advice and an information booklet on tips for sleeping in hospital.

4

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T DO ANYTHING?

Ask if your condition might get worse — or better — if you don't have the treatment right away.

Your everyday health and recovery can be affected if you don't get enough sleep. However, it is best to use non-medicine approaches for sleep because the harms from medicine are likely to outweigh any benefits they might offer.

5

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

Are there any financial, emotional or other impacts?

There are no out-of-ordinary medicine costs. Apart from increasing the risk of falls and confusion, they are addictive and can be more harmful if used with other medicines. Overall, it's best to avoid medicines for sleep. Always ask for advice.

Adapted from material developed by Choosing Wisely Australia® see choosingwisely.org.au for more information.