



Division of Medical Services  
Medicaid Pharmacy Program  
P.O. Box 1437, Slot S415, Little Rock, AR 72203-1437  
P: 501.683.4120 F: 800-424-5851

August 1, 2022

RE: Sedative hypnotics in children

Prescribers and pharmacists,

Multiple behavioral and medical problems can cause insomnia in children with either difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, or a combination of both. Most sleep disturbances can be managed by behavioral therapy which should be considered first line treatment after other medical/physical causes are ruled out. Occasionally, pharmacological therapy may be needed in children especially those with behavioral problems or developmental disabilities. If pharmacotherapy is used, nonpharmacological strategies should be used concurrently.<sup>1 2</sup>

Decisions about the use of pharmacotherapy for insomnia in children should consider the following:

- Little evidence exists on the effectiveness of sedative hypnotics in children
- Short- and long-term side effects in children are concerning
- Evidence of safety is lacking in children with little data on dosing

Given the above, the Arkansas Medicaid DUR Board voted on July 20, 2022 to limit the following prescription medications to patients 18 years of age and older.

Benzodiazepines: temazepam, triazolam, estazolam, and flurazepam

Nonbenzodiazepines: eszopiclone, zaleplon, zolpidem (all formulations), suvorexant, lemborexant, doxepin, daridorexant, and ramelteon

Effective September 1, 2022, the above medications will require a prior authorization request for patients <18 years of age even for the preferred medications. If the FDA expands the label to include ages younger than 18, the system will be updated to reflect that change.

If a sedative hypnotic is deemed necessary for a child, the prescriber must submit the following by fax to 800-424-5851.

- Current chart notes
- Medication requested
- Medical necessity for a sedative in the child

Sincerely,

*Cynthia Neuhofel, Pharm. D.*

Cynthia Neuhofel, Pharm.D.  
DMS Assistant Director/Pharmacy Director

<sup>1</sup> Judith A Owens, MD, "Pharmacotherapy for insomnia in children and adolescents: A rational approach," 2022, [Pharmacotherapy for insomnia in children and adolescents: A rational approach - UpToDate](#) (accessed July 27, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> American Academy of Neurology, "Practice Guidelines: Treatment for Insomnia and Disrupted Sleep Behavior in children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder," 2020, [Practice Guideline: Treatment for Insomnia and Disrupted Sleep Behavior in Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#) (accessed July 27, 2022)