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Melatonin

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What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone made by a part of the brain called the pineal (say: "pie-nee-all") gland. Melatonin may help our bodies know when it's time to go to sleep and when it's time to wake up.

Melatonin supplements (in pill form) are also available. Two types of melatonin may be used in these pills: natural and synthetic (manmade). Natural melatonin is made from the pineal gland of animals. This form could be contaminated with a virus so it is not recommended. The synthetic form of melatonin does not carry this risk. If you are not sure if your melatonin is natural or synthetic, ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking it.

How is melatonin used?

Melatonin can be used to treat insomnia (difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep) or other sleep disorders. It can also be taken to prevent jet lag. Beyond that, there is little scientific evidence that melatonin has a role in promoting health or treating disease. Typical adult doses used to help with sleep or jet lag range from 0.3 mg to 5 mg at bedtime. Lower doses often work as well as higher doses.

Does melatonin have any effect on aging?

No. Despite claims that have been made in magazines and newspapers, no scientific studies have shown that melatonin can slow down the aging process or prolong your life.

Does melatonin require a doctor's prescription?

No. Melatonin is sold without a prescription in health food stores and drug stores in the United States. However, melatonin products are not classified as medicine that must be regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Since melatonin products are not regulated by a government agency, their purity, safety, and effectiveness can't be guaranteed.

Does melatonin have side effects?

Some people who have taken melatonin have reported sleepiness, headache, a "heavy-head" feeling, stomach discomfort, depression, or feeling hungover. Further study is needed to find out more about melatonin's side effects, especially delayed or long-term effects. For example, we don't know if melatonin causes problems when taken with other medicines. We also don't know how melatonin may affect diseases and other medical conditions.

Should I take melatonin for sleep problems or jet lag?

It might be better not to take melatonin until we know more about it. If you decide to try it, talk to your doctor first. Be sure to tell him or her if you have any medical conditions, are already taking any medicines (prescription or OTC) or herbal products, and if you are pregnant or nursing. It is unclear what effect melatonin can have on an unborn baby or nursing infant.

How can I safely take melatonin?

Read the directions on the [label](#) to learn how much melatonin to take and how often to take it. If you have any questions about how much to take, call your family doctor or pharmacist. [Keep a](#)

[record](#) (1-page PDF; [About PDFs](#)) of all OTC medicines and supplements you are using and when you take them. If you need to go to the doctor, take this list with you.

Follow these tips to make sure you are taking the right amount of melatonin:

- Take only the amount recommended on the label. Don't assume that more melatonin will work better or quicker. Taking more than the recommended amount can be dangerous.
- If you are taking a prescription or OTC medicine, ask your doctor if it's okay to also take melatonin.

How do I safely store melatonin?

Store melatonin up and away, out of reach and sight of young children. Keeping medicines and supplements in a cool, dry place will help prevent them from becoming less effective before their expiration dates. Do not store them in bathrooms or bathroom cabinets, which are often hot and humid.

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Source

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