

Melatonin

for the treatment of sleep disorders in children and young people

This leaflet is designed to help you remember what your doctor has told you about melatonin. It explains how melatonin works, how it should be taken and what side effects it might have. Please retain this leaflet for future reference. If your doctor has given you different advice, follow his/her instructions.

Information for Young People

Leeds CAMHS



What happens when melatonin is stopped and is it addictive?

Melatonin is not addictive but it is usually recommended that it is stopped in a planned and gradual way to allow the body to adjust to the change in dosage and for your body to take over producing its own melatonin.

What about school?

Melatonin may cause drowsiness the following day but more commonly teachers report pupils are more alert and able to learn better if treatment has enabled them to have a good nights sleep.

Does melatonin affect pregnancy?

You should discuss with your doctor as soon as possible if you are either planning a family or become pregnant whilst taking melatonin.

How can I find out more?

If you would like more information ask your doctor or pharmacist.

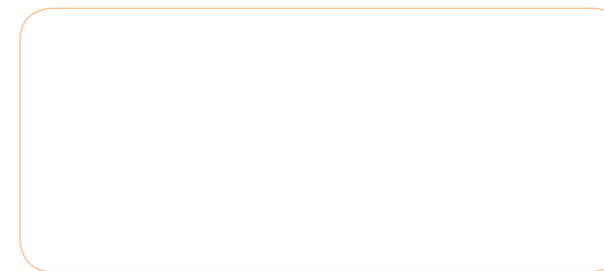
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If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email **lch.pals@nhs.net**

Contact us

Leeds CAMHS
Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm
www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/leedscamhs/



We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages. We can also provide interpreters for languages or signing at your appointment. Please contact us to find out more.



Can I take other medicines?

As the body produces melatonin naturally it isn't thought to affect many other medicines but check with your doctor or pharmacist first.

Use in young people with epilepsy

There are some reports that melatonin may affect seizure control in patients with epilepsy. It is therefore important to monitor the effect of melatonin on seizure frequency if you have epilepsy.

What if a dose is forgotten?

Take it as soon as you remember before you go to bed. If a dose is forgotten do not double up the dose the following the night.

What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone made by the pineal gland in the brain. It is produced at night and helps to regulate the sleep and waking cycles of the body.

What is melatonin used for?

Young people with developmental and/ or behavioural disorders can often have significant problems sleeping. This can include difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep or early morning waking. Melatonin can be taken to help establish a regular sleep pattern in these children.

How should melatonin be taken?

The instructions for taking melatonin will be printed on the label on the box or bottle. The initial dose is 1mg or 2mg taken 30-60 minutes before bedtime. If this does not work the specialist may slowly increase the dose up to 12mg at night.

Are there different types of melatonin?

There are two types of melatonin, a standard preparation and a slow release preparation. The specialist will decide which preparation is indicated as this can vary depending on the nature of the sleep problem(s).

The standard preparation is available in different strength capsules. If the capsules cannot be swallowed whole they can be opened and the contents either mixed in a small amount of liquid or given with some food. Alternatively, your doctor may prescribe a liquid or tablets that dissolve in the mouth.

Slow release melatonin is usually prescribed as a tablet, also known by its brand name - Circadin®, which should be swallowed whole.

If the slow release tablet (Circadin®) cannot be swallowed the specialist may prescribe a slow release capsule instead. This is because the capsule can be opened and the contents sprinkled on cold food (e.g. a spoonful of yogurt, mousse or apple sauce). The contents of the slow release capsule should not be chewed nor should they be mixed with liquids or hot food.

How is melatonin supplied?

Melatonin is usually started by the specialist and the prescribing may later be taken over by your own GP to enable you to obtain supplies from your local pharmacy. Melatonin may have to be specially ordered by the pharmacy so hand in your prescription in advance before you run out of melatonin.

Melatonin slow release tablets (Circadin®) do not have a license for use in young people so the leaflet in the pack will not tell you everything you need to know. The other melatonin preparations (capsules, liquid and orodispersible tablets) are classed as unlicensed medicines but can be prescribed by doctors on prescription. Many medicines given to children and young people are unlicensed and this does not mean they are unsafe.

An information leaflet produced by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, which gives more information on unlicensed medicines and the use of medicines in children is available on request. Your doctor or pharmacist can also answer any questions you may have on this.

How long will they have to be taken for?

Take them for as long as the doctor instructs you to. Your doctor may increase the dose by 1mg to 2mg every 7-14 days if there is no improvement in the sleep pattern.

The maximum dose is 12mg each night. If there is no improvement after 7-14 days on the maximum dose your doctor will probably discontinue treatment. Some young people may be able to stop treatment after 6 months of an improved sleeping pattern. For some young people however, withdrawal may not be successful and they require long term treatment. Do not stop taking them without checking with your doctor first.

Are there any side effects?

Melatonin is tolerated well in most young people. Some people experience confusion, headaches or a "heavy head" feeling. A small number of young people may become excitable and agitated and some may have vivid dreams or nightmares and the melatonin may need to be stopped.

Is there anything that will boost melatonin naturally?

Exposure to daylight or bright artificial light in the morning coupled with low lighting in the evening can help promote melatonin production in the brain naturally. Certain foods can also provide a naturally rich source of melatonin: oats, sweetcorn, rice, ginger, tomatoes and barley.

Caffeine in tea, coffee, cola drinks and chocolate and exposure to bright lights before bedtime can decrease naturally occurring melatonin and should be avoided.

