

Melatonin (say: mellow-toe-ninn)

What is melatonin used for?

- Melatonin (also called Circadin® and others) is usually used to help treat insomnia i.e. problems getting to sleep
- It is only licensed in adults over 55, although it can be taken by younger people
- It is available as tablets and a liquid.

Melatonin can help get sleep back in line with day and night. Melatonin doesn't just send the person to sleep. It helps boost melatonin levels, which is the brain's usual trigger to go to sleep.

What is the usual dose of melatonin?

- The usual dose of melatonin is 2mg at bedtime, but can be higher or lower.

How should I take melatonin?

- Swallow the tablets whole, with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing
- This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.

When should I take melatonin?

- Take your melatonin about 1-2 hours before going to bed
- It can be taken with or after food.

You should make sure you use 'sleep hygiene' as well (ask to see leaflet on this for more information and help) Make sure that your child does not watch television or use a computer for an hour before going to bed as the light from these can stop their body making its own melatonin.

What are the alternatives to melatonin?

- There are many other medicines (e.g. 'Z hypnotics'), talking therapies, sleep hygiene and other treatments for insomnia and some of the causes of insomnia.

- ☞ See our "Handy chart" for insomnia to help you compare the medicines available
- ☞ This will help you discuss your care with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

How long will melatonin take to work?

- Melatonin usually starts to have an effect in about an hour
- The effect lasts about 4-8 hours or so.

How long will I need to keep taking melatonin for?

- Circadin® can be taken for up to 13 weeks, which is usually enough to get your brain back into the right pattern of sleeping again but it can be taken for longer than this.

Is melatonin addictive and can I stop taking it suddenly?

- Melatonin is not addictive and no discontinuation or withdrawal symptoms have been seen
- You can stop it suddenly without risk of any problems. Other than not sleeping well.

See our handy fact sheet on 'Coming off medicines'

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of melatonin?

- Take the dose as soon as you remember, before going to sleep
- If you forget completely, start again the next day.

If you need to take this every night and often have problems remembering your doses (as many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or case manager about this. Webster and other packs can help you remember.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking it?

- If you drink alcohol while taking melatonin it may make you feel more sleepy, especially the next morning
- This is important if you need to drive or operate machines and you must seek advice on this.

Will melatonin affect my other medication?

Melatonin has a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:

- The effect of melatonin can be increased by oral contraceptives, HRT, fluvoxamine and some antibiotics (quinolones)
- The effect of melatonin can be decreased by alcohol, carbamazepine, rifampicin and smoking
- Melatonin can increase the effects of benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam), zopiclone and zopiclone.

You must see the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet for the full list of interactions. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you must follow your doctor's instructions carefully.



Will I need any blood or other tests if I am taking melatonin?

- You should not need a blood test while you are taking melatonin.

Can I drive, cycle or operate a boat while I am taking melatonin?

- You may feel a sleepy the next morning after taking melatonin so be careful as it may slow down your reaction times
- Until this wears off, or you know how melatonin affects you, do not drive or operate machines.

What sort of side-effects might I get if I am taking melatonin?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the Consumer Information Leaflet (CMI) for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Others may get some that are not listed. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting slower may help. If you think you might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your doctor, pharmacist or case manager.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
VERY COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
Abnormal dreams	Your dreams seem more vivid than usual and there seem to be more of them.	This is nothing to worry about. It is probably just that you are remembering your dreams more.
Nausea	Feeling sick and possibly being sick.	Take the melatonin with or after food. If you are sick for more than a day, contact your doctor. This tends to wear off after a few days or a week or so.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie or sit down if you feel it coming on. Don't drive.

Lifeline provides 24hr telephone crisis support on 13 11 14 or visit www.lifeline.org.au for information & downloads

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand more about melatonin. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet. You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else.

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