

### How long will my child require Melatonin?

The majority of children will commence Melatonin on a short trial of 3-12 months. You will then have a review with your clinician. If there has been no improvement to your child's sleep then the Melatonin will be stopped. If the Melatonin has helped to create an established sleep routine then the clinician may look at weaning the Melatonin. If your child remains on Melatonin they will need to have 6-12 monthly reviews with their clinician. If your child is still on Melatonin after two years they will need to have a trial withdrawal of treatment to assess their requirement.

### Night waking

If your child takes Melatonin but is waking up during the night it is important to contact your clinician or let them know at your child's next appointment. They will be able to talk through techniques on how to manage this effectively.

### Sleep hygiene

It is extremely important to ensure that your child adheres to good sleep hygiene. Here are some tips:

Having a good clear routine leading up to bedtime – this can also be in place from when your

- child gets home from school. This needs to be followed strictly every

day (including weekends).

- No screens in the hour before bedtime – this is because screens emit a blue/green light which reduces the natural production of Melatonin.
- Ensure that your child's room is a good sleep enhancing environment this includes ensuring it is dark, cool and has minimal noise and distractions.
- Ensure your child doesn't eat a large meal or drink any caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea, energy drinks, soda, chocolate drinks) two hours before bedtime.

**Good sleep hygiene is extremely important for children with sleep disorders as research suggests that it can be just as effective/if not more so than Melatonin usage.**

NICE Guidance: Sleep disorders in children and young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: melatonin

Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: support and management

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

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## Melatonin Information Paediatric



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### What is Melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone which is produced in the brain by the pineal gland and is released by the body during the hours of darkness. Melatonin helps us to regulate our sleep pattern. Before trialling Melatonin you may be asked to fill out a sleep diary or improve your child's sleep hygiene.

### How will it help?

Childhood sleeping problems are common and can be particularly problematic for children who have neurological problems. A number of studies have found that giving Melatonin as a medicine for **short periods** of time can have beneficial effects regulating a child's sleep pattern. Good sleep is really important and can aid children's:

- Physical health
- Mood
- Behaviour
- Development

### How to administer Melatonin

Your child's clinician will advise you on how to administer Melatonin and allow you to ask any questions you may have.

### How much Melatonin to give?

Your clinician will make a decision on how much Melatonin your child will require. The dose will be shown on the medicine label. Only administer the dose prescribed. If you give too much please contact NHS 111 or 999 in an emergency.

### Possible side effects

We administer Melatonin in order to help establish a good sleep routine but like most medications there is always a risk of reaction.

**Rarely, Melatonin can cause problems with your child's heart. If your child develops chest pain or has a fast heart rate (they may have a fluttering feeling in their chest or feel their heart beating quickly), contact your doctor straight away or take your child to hospital. If your child seems very unwell in anyway that is unusual for them and you are concerned, take them to hospital or call 999.**

### Other side-effects you need to know about:

- Your child may feel dizzy or nervous, or may have stomach pain
- Your child may develop a rash or itch

If your child experiences any side effects please contact your child's clinician for a review as soon as possible.

### Long-term effects of Melatonin

There is very little evidence on the long term effects of Melatonin for children; the longest study only looks into effects of up to two years. For this reason it is important that once a child's sleep routine is established we wean the dose and cease administration. There is some concern that long term use of Melatonin can have similar side effects to long term use of benzodiazepine and Z-drug hypnotics. This includes effects such as:

- Falls
- Dependence
- Withdrawal problems

It is also important to highlight that there is a theoretical risk of puberty delay with long term Melatonin use.

It is important to talk to your clinician about any concerns.

Further information can be found at:  
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/>