

# Melatonin

[Home](#) » [Patients](#) » [Melatonin](#)

October 2020 | Reviewed by: *Shelley Hershner, MD and Andrea Matsumura, MD*

## What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone that is naturally produced by your body and plays an important role in sleep. It helps regulate your sleep-wake cycle by signaling to your body when the time for sleep is approaching. Melatonin supplements are widely available and can be effective for circadian rhythm disorders. A circadian rhythm disorder is when your body's biological clock is out of sync with societal norms including with your obligations. Some examples of circadian rhythm disorders are [delayed sleep-wake phase](#) (night owl), [jet lag](#), and [shift work disorder](#).

When it gets dark at nighttime your body starts to produce melatonin. Melatonin starts your body clock

[What is melatonin?](#)

[Forms of melatonin](#)

[Benefits of melatonin](#)

[Treatments using melato](#)

[Dosage for melatonin](#)

[Side effects of melatonin](#)



# What are the forms of melatonin?

[Get Involved](#)[Topics A-Z](#)

Over-the-counter melatonin supplements are available in doses of 1-10 mg. Melatonin is sold as a dietary supplement and is not regulated by the FDA. So, it is possible for the content of the supplement to differ from what is listed on the product label. Before you take melatonin be sure the brand is reputable and discuss taking this and any supplement with your doctor. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine states that melatonin supplements appear to be safe. There is no evidence of serious risks related to their use, but the long-term effects are unknown.

Snacks and beverages marketed as “relaxation” or “chill out” products containing various doses of melatonin along with other ingredients also are available. These products are not regulated by the FDA and are not guaranteed to be effective.

---

## What are benefits and side effects of melatonin?

Melatonin is most effective in treating sleep disorders related to your body clock. It can be used to shift the timing of your sleep. This is best done in conjunction



# How can melatonin treat circadian rhythm disorders?

Your use of melatonin to help treat your circadian rhythm disorder should be overseen by a sleep doctor. The timing and dosage will vary for each person. Melatonin may be beneficial in the treatment of the following disorders:

## Jet lag

Research strongly suggests that melatonin is effective in reducing the symptoms of jet lag. Doctors recommend taking melatonin before your intended bedtime, beginning before the start of your trip and continuing for a few days after your arrival. Small doses may be effective for minimizing the effects of jet lag.

## Shift work

Melatonin may help improve sleep quality and duration for some night shift workers. Take melatonin after the end of your shift, prior to your intended bedtime. But don't take melatonin before your drive home.



## Healthy Sleep

## Sleep Disorders

## Patients

## Resources

Mythias is delayed by two or more hours. Taking melatonin may help you go to sleep earlier. Typically, a small dose before you normally fall asleep may help.

Get Involved

Topics A-Z



Melatonin may also be helpful for other circadian rhythm sleep disorders including [advanced sleep-wake phase](#), free-running type or [irregular sleep-wake rhythm](#).

## What is the dosage for melatonin?

Researchers aren't certain which dose of melatonin is most effective. It has been studied at doses ranging from 0.3 mg to 10 mg. It is possible for a small dose to work better than a large dose. A dose of about 0.3 mg closely resembles the level of your body's natural melatonin production. Larger doses cause the melatonin in your blood to peak at a much higher level.

Studies show that timing may be more important than dose. The most effective time to take melatonin is different for everyone and can vary depending on your sleep problem. In certain cases, melatonin may be even more effective when used as part of a treatment plan that also includes [bright light therapy](#).

## What are the side effects of melatonin?

