

Melatonin for sleep disorders

This leaflet is about the use of melatonin for particular sleep problems in childhood. It is used to help children who have problems getting to sleep at the start of the night.



This leaflet has been written for parents and carers about how to use this medicine in children. Our information sometimes differs from that provided by the manufacturers, because their information is usually aimed at adult patients. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Name of drug

Melatonin

Common brand: Circadin® (modified-release tablets)

Melatonin is available in a range of branded products.

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Poor sleep can affect your child's physical health, mood, behaviour and development. Melatonin is used to help regulate the sleep pattern of children. Melatonin may help your child to get into a regular sleep pattern.

What is melatonin available as?

- **Modified-release tablets** (Circadin): 2 mg
- **Tablets and capsules** from 0.5 to 5 mg (this is a 'special order' medicine and has to be ordered in advance by your pharmacist)
- **Liquid medicine:** 5 mg per 5 mL (this has to be ordered specially by your pharmacist)

When should I give melatonin?


Melatonin is best given once a day, between half an hour and an hour before your child's agreed bedtime.

Give the medicine at about the same time each day so that this becomes part of your child's daily routine, which will help you to remember.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of melatonin (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

Your doctor will probably recommend that your child has a low dose to start with. They may then increase the dose until your child's sleep problems have improved. Normally, the dose will not be more than 10 mg per day.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much to give.**

How should I give melatonin?



Modified-release tablets (Circadin) should be swallowed whole unless your doctor or pharmacist has told you otherwise. Your child should not chew the tablet. Sometimes, your doctor or pharmacist may have told you to crush it – this will make it act faster, but the effect will not last as long.



Other tablets and capsules should be swallowed with a glass of water, milk or juice. You can crush the tablet or open the capsule, and mix the contents with a small amount of soft food such as yogurt, jam or mashed potato. Make sure your child swallows it straight away, without chewing.



Liquid medicine: Measure out the right amount using an oral syringe or medicine spoon. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

When should the medicine start working?

Melatonin should start to make your child feel sleepy about half an hour to an hour after taking a dose.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of melatonin, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose of melatonin, you do not need to give them another dose that night.

What if I forget to give it?

If you miss a dose and your child is already asleep, wait until the next day and give the normal dose as usual. If your child is still awake, give them the normal dose.

What if I give too much?


If you think you may have given your child too much melatonin, contact your doctor or local NHS services (111 in parts of England; 0845 4647 in parts of England and Wales; 111 in Scotland).

Take the medicine container or packaging with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor. Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects that you must do something about

 Rarely, melatonin can cause problems with your child's heart. If your child develops a severe chest pain or has a fast heart rate (they may have a fluttering feeling in their chest or feel their heart beating fast), contact your doctor straight away or take your child to hospital.



If your child seems very unwell in any way that is unusual for them and you are concerned, take them to hospital.

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 and itch.

If you are concerned about any of these side-effects contact your doctor.

There may, sometimes, be other side-effects that are not listed above. If you notice anything unusual and are concerned, contact your doctor. You can report any suspected side-effects to a UK safety scheme at <http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>.

Can other medicines be given at the same time as melatonin?

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

- Treatment with melatonin is usually started by a specialist.
- A specialist may suggest that your child takes just one dose of melatonin before having a CT scan, MRI scan or EEG, when they might be expected to lie still for a while.

General advice about medicines

- Only give this medicine to *your* child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.



If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor straight away.

- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the medicine you have at home has not reached the 'best before' or 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about melatonin and about other medicines used to treat sleep disorders.

You can also get more information from:

England

NHS 111: 111 - www.nhs.uk

Scotland

NHS 24: 111 - www.nhs24.com

Wales/Galw Lechyd Cymru

NHS Direct: 0845 4647 - www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland

NI Direct: www.nidirect.gov.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk