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Melatonin – More than a Sleep Aid?

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Introduction

In June 2013, melatonin supplementation was found to reduce pain associated with endometriosis.

Forty females with endometriosis between 18-45 years of age received 10 mg melatonin daily or a placebo for eight weeks. **The researchers evaluated the subjects for pain, sleep quality and analgesic use. The melatonin supplementation was found to improve sleep quality and lessen pain, reducing the need for pain medicine by 80 percent.** Other studies are finding that melatonin may be effective at fighting cancer and promoting a stronger immune system.

Made in a small gland in the brain, melatonin is a hormone that controls your sleep/wake cycles. While we make melatonin in our brain, we also obtain small amounts of melatonin from meats, grains, fruits, and vegetables. Melatonin is also available as an over the counter supplement.

Our bodies have an internal clock which controls how much melatonin is made for regulating sleep/wake

cycles to control when we fall asleep and awaken. Melatonin usually begins to rise in the mid- to late evening, remaining high for most of the night, with levels that drop during the early morning.

Sunlight affects how much melatonin your body produces. As the sun goes down we



tend to produce more melatonin. Bright light, including artificial light will prevent melatonin production which should be increasing around 9 pm.

Melatonin production decreases as we age making it more difficult for older adults with little melatonin to get good sleep. Teenagers also have a temporary shift in their nightly melatonin release with delayed release leading to later sleeping and waking times.

QUESTION:
Where is the Melatonin producing gland found in our bodies?

- A) throat
- B) pancreas
- C) brain

ANSWER:
C) brain

TRUE OR FALSE:
As we age we produce more Melatonin

ANSWER:
False – we produce less

Finish this sentence...

Some Melatonin can also be obtained by eating.....

- A) meat
- B) fruit
- C) vegetables

ANSWER:
A), B) and C) – meat, fruit and vegetables

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Why is melatonin used as a dietary supplement?

Melatonin supplements are often used for the treatment of insomnia (reducing the time it takes to get to sleep) although they are also used by those who are travelling for the treatment of jet lag.

Scientists are also looking at using melatonin to treat these health concerns:

- To minimize seasonal affective disorder (SAD)/winter depression.
- Controlling sleep patterns for people who work night shifts.
- To reduce sleep and confusion issues after surgery.
- Reducing cluster headaches.
- Treating endometriosis related pain.
- As a possible anti-aging supplement.
- To maximize success in cancer treatment.



It has been suggested that the anti-oxidant and free radical properties of melatonin may protect healthy cells from radiation and chemotherapy while working as an agent to make the immune system stronger.

Is taking a melatonin dietary supplement safe?

Melatonin supplements are generally safe in low doses for both short-term and long-term use. Too much melatonin can have side effects such as sleepiness, a lower core body temperature, vivid dreams, brain fog, daytime drowsiness, abdominal discomfort, mild anxiety, irritability, confusion and short-lasting feelings of depression. These symptoms generally resolve when melatonin usage stops. In addition, melatonin supplements can interact with medications, particularly blood thinners, diabetes medicines, birth control pills and immune-suppressants.

For melatonin to be helpful, the correct dosage, method and time of day it is taken must be appropriate to the sleep problem. Taking it at the "wrong" time of day may reset your biological clock in an undesirable direction

Quote to Inspire

"The best cure for insomnia is to get a lot of sleep."

W. C. Fields

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