

Use of melatonin in sleep disorders

The leaflet aims to answer your questions about taking melatonin to treat your sleep disorder. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone, which is released by the body during the hours of darkness. It is involved in the promotion of sleep and the regulation of the human body clock. This effect has led melatonin to be used as a medicine to treat sleep disorders that involve disruption of the body clock, including circadian rhythm disorders and rapid eye movement sleep disorders.

The use of melatonin for these conditions is unlicensed. This means that although the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way, there is evidence that it works to treat these particular conditions. This is why it is important for you to read our leaflet **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients**, which has more information about this subject. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively you can call the Pharmacy Medicines Helpline – contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

How do I take the medicine?

The usual dose is one 2mg tablet of modified-release melatonin (Circadin[®]) every night. It is usually taken 30–60 minutes before bedtime. Always follow the instructions you have been given. The tablet should be swallowed whole and should not be crushed or chewed.

What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you have forgotten to take the dose before you fall asleep do not take an extra dose the following evening.

Are there any side effects?

The following are examples of some of the side effects reported by patients taking melatonin. For further **information on side effects, please see the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medicine.**

Side effect (What is it?)	What should I do if it happens?
Uncommon	
Headache	Take your usual painkiller (e.g. paracetamol)
Reduced body temperature	Contact your GP before taking the next dose.
Itching	Try applying a moisturising cream or anti-itch cream.
Rare	
Fast heart beat (palpitations)	Contact your GP before taking the next dose.

If any of the side effects persist or become a problem, contact your GP/consultant or pharmacist.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Melatonin rarely causes problems with other medicines. Check with your GP, consultant or pharmacist if you have any worries. If you are buying any medicines over-the-counter from a pharmacy always mention that you have been prescribed melatonin. It is safe to take ibuprofen or paracetamol with this medicine. Advice should be sought when purchasing herbal or homeopathic remedies.

This medicine should be stored at room temperature away from direct sunlight, heat and out of reach of children. The expiry date is printed on the container. Do not use the medicine after this date. The remainder should be returned to your local pharmacy to be discarded.

Where can I get a repeat prescription?

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for melatonin, which you can take to your local community pharmacy for supply.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder please contact the Sleep Disorder Centre on 020 7188 3430 (9am – 5pm).

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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