ARIZONA CENTER FOR
Integrative Medicine
www.azcim.org

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Melatonin

WHAT IS IT?

Melatonin (MT) is a hormone produced in the pineal gland that plays a key role in managing our body's sleep/wake cycle (circadian rhythm). Melatonin tells the brain when it's dark and time to rest. MT increases REM (rapid-eye movement) sleep, and the vividness, frequency and recall of dreams. MT is also key factor in the regulation of a wide range of hormones and brain chemicals; has potent antioxidant properties, and may even have anti-cancer properties.

MT levels naturally decline as we get older. Additionally, many things can suppress or interfere with MT production, such as: caffeine, alcohol, over-the-counter pain relievers, and some medications. Exposure to excessive nighttime light also suppresses MT production and release. Disrupted or decreased levels of MT are commonly associated with sleep disturbance.

WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

Your health care provider might recommend melatonin for:

- ❑ Insomnia (trouble falling asleep or staying asleep) as part of an integrative sleep program
- ❑ Prevention or management of jet lag or shift-work related fatigue

HOW DO I TAKE IT?

A regular release or sublingual delivery may be best if you have problems falling asleep, while a sustained or time release formulation may be more effective if you have trouble staying asleep. Regular and sustained-release forms can be combined.

DOSE: For the treatment of insomnia, typical MT doses range from 0.3 mg to 3 mg taken 20-30 minutes before your desired bedtime. Studies show that lower doses may be more effective, but there are no standard recommendations for dosing.

CONCERNS?

Melatonin has been quite safe in numerous studies. The most common complaint with MT is excessive dreaming. Some minor side include fatigue, stomach upset and morning grogginess. Combining MT with sedating drugs may result in increased sedation. Since MT may boost immunity, some experts believe it should be used with caution in those with autoimmune disorders. Long term use in children and adolescents remains under study. The safety of melatonin supplementation in pregnancy and while breastfeeding is not known.

Make sure to ask your health care provider exactly how and when you should take this product.

My Health Care Provider's Notes:

Updated February 2016

Robert G. McNeill, D.D.S., M.D., www.texasddsmd.com