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[Sleep Disorders](#)

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE GIVING YOUR CHILD MELATONIN

[2 Comments](#) 05 November 2013



Between 2007 and 2012 the sale of melatonin, a hormone supplement designed to promote sleep, more than doubled. While we don't know how many parents are using melatonin to help their kids sleep, there's plenty of discussion around this topic.

We asked our expert, "Is melatonin safe for kids?"

Psychologist and [Sleep Disorders](#) Expert William David Brown, Ph.D., with [Children's Medical Center](#) says the melatonin supplement is generally considered safe and effective when used short-term and in the appropriate dose.



William David Brown,
Ph.D.

Dr. Brown says melatonin may be an acceptable last resort, but parents should try other bedtime routine adjustments such as turning off the TV earlier, avoiding sweets near bedtime and maintaining a consistent bedtime routine that includes calm, quiet activities such as reading.

Exposure to bright early morning light can also set the body's clock and help kids be ready for sleep at bedtime. Eating breakfast outside may be a good way for your child to get the sunlight their body needs for good sleep and a dose of vitamin D, too.

When evaluating if your child needs melatonin, always check with your child's pediatrician, and understand some of the potential drawbacks.

Potential Drawbacks of Melatonin

- **Lack of Research.** There is not a great deal of research on the long-term impact of melatonin use in children.
- **Not for Those With Autoimmune Disorders.** Melatonin can boost the immune system, so it's not recommended for anyone with an autoimmune disorder, such as celiac disease or arthritis.
- **Dosage.** Melatonin is most commonly sold in doses made for adults. Children should only be given between 0.3 to 1 milligrams of melatonin.
- **Morning Grogginess.** A fairly common after effect of using a melatonin supplement in the evening, is that your child may have difficulty waking quickly in the morning.

Melatonin

Melatonin is a hormone produced by the brain to help regulate the natural sleep cycle. It's production is partly affected by light and melatonin supplements are used to treat several symptoms including to help control sleep and wake cycles.

For more on what Dr. Brown has to say on giving your child melatonin, check out CBS' Tracy Kornet's report on [Parents Using Hormone Supplement to Get Kids to Sleep](#).

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[Janet Janes Davis](#) - who has written 4 posts on [Children's Medical Center Dallas Blog](#).

Janet Janes Davis began her writing career by covering medical advances for a community hospital on the south side of Chicago. Now, as a member of the Children's Medical Center blog team, Janet enjoys sharing information designed to help parents make life better for children.

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Your Comments

2 Comments so far

1. [Angela Patterson](#) says:
[November 10, 2013 at 10:39 pm](#)

My 8-year-old daughter has Angelman Syndrome. We SWEAR by melatonin in addition to her 2 RXs. It's a way of life for us. We hope it's healthy but can't live without it now....

[Reply](#)

2. [Sarah Burns](#) says:
[November 8, 2013 at 8:25 am](#)

Great post – we recently began giving our son melatonin because it was taking him hours to fall asleep. He's taken about .25mg nightly for three weeks and we've seen dramatic improvement in his behavior and attitude during the day.

Sleep is important!

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Sleep Disorders

The Sleep Disorders Center at Children's Medical Center is the sole pediatric-only sleep center in Dallas accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. For more information, visit childrens.com or call 214-456-2793.

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