Melatonin – version 4 (Hampshire) Information for Families

What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone produced by the pineal gland in the brain. It is produced at night and helps regulate our sleep pattern. It helps the body know when it’s time to go to sleep and when it’s time to wake up. The capsules you receive contain a synthetic version of this hormone. No company currently holds a UK licence (hence we call this an unlicensed medicine) to supply melatonin to be used as a medicine or health supplement in children and young people, therefore your psychiatrist will have given careful consideration to prescribing it, and will discuss this fully with you.

Why has it been prescribed?

Melatonin is prescribed to help children and young people who have problems settling to sleep, when other ways of trying to improve their sleep have not worked. These other methods should not stop, but should continue alongside the melatonin. An accompanying information leaflet is also available on sleep hygiene (tips on getting to sleep).

How should it be taken?

Melatonin should be taken at the dosage prescribed by the psychiatrist or GP, and must not be changed without his/her advice. It should be taken as a single dose 30 to 60 minutes before it is hoped to go to sleep. When taking melatonin you should make sure that you are not watching television or using a computer for an hour before going to bed as the light from these can stop the body making its own melatonin.

The capsules should usually be swallowed whole with a beaker of water, milk or orange juice but can be dissolved in water or another liquid if there are swallowing problems.

Does melatonin have any problems or side effects?

Each person reacts differently to medicines and will not necessarily suffer from any of the side effects mentioned here. The most common problem with melatonin is that sometimes it simply does not bring about any improvement. Other than this, side effects are fairly uncommon, but may include headaches and dizziness. Rare side effects are restlessness, increased heart rate, itching and nausea.

Is it safe to take other medicines with melatonin?

It is safe for a child or young person to take paracetamol in the dosage recommended for their age alongside melatonin. For most other medicines, there has been no study of using them with melatonin. If you are discussing other medicines with any doctor or pharmacist, tell them that melatonin is being taken.

How long should melatonin be taken for?

It is usually recommended to continue with melatonin for several weeks if it is found to be useful. After this it is likely that melatonin will be stopped to see if a good sleep pattern has been established without the need for further melatonin. Stopping the melatonin once does not mean it can not be restarted later if your psychiatrist or GP feel it is needed again. If long-term use is agreed it is very important that the treatment is regularly reviewed by the psychiatrist. If
appointments for these regular reviews are missed without good reason then the melatonin is likely to be stopped until a review takes place.

Where can I get more information or ask questions about melatonin?

This brief leaflet covers only some of the aspects of treatment with melatonin. The psychiatrist who prescribed the melatonin, or other members of his/her team, will be pleased to discuss it further with you and answer any questions that you have now or in the future. Their contact number is below.

You can also speak to a pharmacist within the Trust who will be happy to give you more information. Initially, please contact the children and young peoples (ChYPS) pharmacist on: 07825 118323

If the ChYPS pharmacist is unavailable, please leave a message or contact one of the numbers provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Service Teams (ChYPS)</th>
<th>Pharmacy Departments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aldershot 01252 335600</td>
<td>myPharmacy 0800 9177115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andover 01264 835356</td>
<td>(Supplying Chemist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashurst 02380 743000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basingstoke 01256 842800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastleigh 02380 673984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fareham 01329 822220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havant 02392 224560</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winchester 02380 673984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where can a supply be obtained from?

The brand of melatonin that the Trust endorses to usually be prescribed is called Ramatonin®. Because Ramatonin® is unlicensed in the UK, many community pharmacists will not be able to stock this brand of melatonin. Therefore Ramatonin® is supplied to patients and their families by a postal service, which comes from pharmacy (chemist) in Sussex. The doctor or nurse who newly prescribes Ramatonin® or changes the dose will send a prescription to the pharmacy and the Ramatonin® will be sent out in the post to you within a few days.

If Ramatonin® works and a decision is made to use it longer than a few months, the prescriber will be able to write a prescription for up to a maximum of six months. This six month prescription will be held by the pharmacy in Sussex. You will be able to contact the pharmacy every two months to get a further supply, which will be posted to you. Each time you are sent a supply you will also be sent a request slip.

When you need another supply the request slip can either be posted back to the pharmacy or you can order your next supply on the internet from the pharmacy. The request slip will explain how to order online. A supply can also be ordered from the pharmacy using the Freephone number indicated above. The pharmacy will make sure the specialist is contacted in time to get another prescription. You will not have to do anything yourself to get another prescription. If the specialist decides to change the dose or stop the medication, they will contact the pharmacy to change the prescription or stop further supplies coming to your home.

Another form of melatonin called Circadin® will sometimes be prescribed if the Ramatonin® has been found to be ineffective at helping with sleep problems. Circadin® will be prescribed on a prescription that you need to take to your local pharmacy. This will not be posted to you as it is readily obtained by all pharmacies.