

## Melatonin Helps you Get Some ZZZ



### By Dr. Jean-Jacques Dugoua, ND

Just when you're looking forward to a calm and restful night of sleep, insomnia hits. You toss and turn, you try different sleeping positions, you get up for a bit and the next thing you know, the alarm is ringing and it's time to get up. Insomnia is one of many sleeping disorders that affect the general population. Wouldn't it be nice if there was a supplement that could treat a large number of sleeping disorders?

#### Melatonin to the rescue

Melatonin is a hormone that is naturally produced by the pineal gland in the brain. It is often referred to as the sleep hormone. Melatonin has been shown to facilitate sleep, significantly shorten the time needed to go to sleep, reduce the number of night awakenings, and improve sleep quality. When taken orally, melatonin has been shown to improve the symptoms of various sleep disorders—here are just a few.

#### Melatonin and insomnia

Melatonin has been shown to be most beneficial in improving sleep quality in the elderly. Studies have shown that elderly patients taking melatonin saw improvements in their symptoms of insomnia. Studies have also shown that melatonin improves sleep quality in adults and in children. Melatonin also seems to improve secondary insomnia related to depression, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease, hospitalization and "ICU syndrome," referring to sleep disturbances while in the intensive care unit.

#### Melatonin and jet lag

Taking melatonin appears to reduce symptoms of jet lag. A study investigated the efficacy of oral melatonin in alleviating jet lag in flight crews after a series of international flights. Fifty-two international cabin crew members were studied. The researchers observed a significantly faster recovery of energy and alertness and concluded that melatonin showed may have potential benefits for international aircrew.

#### Melatonin and circadian rhythm disorders

The body is regulated by over 100 built-in clocks that create the circadian rhythm. Some people develop circadian rhythm disorders, where their sleep-wake cycle does not correspond to the normal day and night routine. Studies have shown that taking melatonin helps improve circadian rhythm sleep disorders in children and adults.