



**APPRENDRE
À DORMIR**

Melatonin in children: let's talk about it together!

Popular science communication: Abygaëlle Côté,
Ph.D candidate R/I, Catherine Lord, Ph.D. and
Evelyne Touchette, Ph.D

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Let's talk about it together

At “Learning to Sleep Like Learning to Walk,” we know that **melatonin raises a lot of doubts and questions** among parents. And that’s normal!

Here are some questions we often hear from parents:

*“My child has trouble falling asleep... is it really **safe** to give them melatonin?”*

*“I’m afraid they’ll **get used to it**... could they end up not being able to fall asleep without it?”*

*“I sometimes read that it can affect hormones... could it **harm** their growth later on?”*

*“When I see all the different products on the shelves, I wonder: how can I be sure that the one I’m buying is **reliable**?”*

Thanks to a grant from the Quebec Sleep Research Network, we will **attempt to answer your questions based on current scientific knowledge** through future **articles or tools** to be released during 2025-2026. (No individual responses will be provided.)

Considering what we know to date (see below for an overview), **we would like to hear your questions.**

All your questions and comments are **valid** and will remain **anonymous**.

What would you like to understand about melatonin?

What experiences or concerns would you like to share?

Please feel free to write to us; we need your insights to support you with evidence-based data and shed light on this health choice.

Message

Send

A quick look at what we know

Melatonin does much more than regulate sleep

Melatonin is a hormone produced by the brain, more specifically by the pineal gland. It is often associated solely with sleep because **it increases in our bodies at night, but its role goes far beyond that.**

- It acts mainly on the hypothalamus, a part of the brain that controls several vital functions.

- It also has effects on various organs and tissues: the liver, pancreas, endocrine glands, adipose tissue, muscles, heart, blood vessels, and even the immune system.

Melatonin does not only help you fall asleep; its effects are much broader.

A look at the situation in Canada

In Canada, melatonin is easy to find in pharmacies because it is considered a **dietary supplement** (and **not a sleeping pill**). This is not the case everywhere, and in several countries (the United Kingdom, Norway, Japan, Australia), it is only available with a prescription.

Here is what we know:

- The **quality of products varies greatly**: some analyses have shown inaccurate doses and even the presence of unlisted substances such as serotonin.
- **Medical consultations and cases of melatonin poisoning** are on the rise.
- No products are currently **approved for children and adolescents under 18** in Canada.

Be sure to always keep melatonin **out of the reach of children**.

What science says

There are still **very few studies** on the effects of short-term melatonin use and even fewer on long-term use in typically developing children. A few studies exist on its use under medical supervision in children with neuroatypical development (ADHD, ASD).

Before using melatonin, it is best to **talk to a healthcare professional**. Only healthcare specialists are qualified to provide medical advice.

Texts to learn more as a parent:

- Naitre et Grandir. (2023) [Mélatonine: la solution aux problèmes de sommeil des enfants?](#)
- Naître et grandir. (2024). [Problème de sommeil: donner ou non de la mélatonine à un enfant?](#)

Inspiration and scientific sources:

- Hartstein, L. E., Garrison, M. M., Lewin, D., Boergers, J., & LeBourgeois, M. K. (2024). Characteristics of Melatonin Use Among US Children and Adolescents. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 178(1), 91–93. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.4749>
- McCarthy, C. (2022). New advice on melatonin use in children : An advisory is issued on over-the-counter melatonin supplements. *Harvard Health Publishing*. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/new-advice-on-melatonin-use-in-children-202210062832>
- Rzepka-Migut, B., & Paprocka, J. (2020). Efficacy and Safety of Melatonin Treatment in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder-A Review of the Literature. *Brain Sciences*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci10040219>
- Tran, K., & Mahood, Q. (2022). *Melatonin for the Treatment of Insomnia in Children and Adolescents*. CADTH Health Technology. <https://www.cda-amc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/htis/2022/RC1423%20%20Melatonin%20Insomnia%20Peds%20Final.pdf>