

# Melatonin for kids: Is it safe? How to help school children get good sleep

September 10 2023, by Cara Murez

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Lots of parents are giving their children the supplement melatonin to

help with sleep, but is it safe?

In a new survey, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) found that 46% of parents—what it called a "shocking number"—have given melatonin to children under the age of 13. About 30% gave their teenager melatonin to aid in sleep.

Yet, there is little evidence that melatonin helps with insomnia in children, the AASM said.

A [natural hormone](#) that helps regulate the body's internal clock, melatonin may seem like a simple solution, the AASM said.

Yet the organization noted important safety concerns.

Parents should talk to a health care professional before giving melatonin or any supplement to children, the AASM advised. Melatonin supplements do not have U.S. Food and Drug Administration oversight in the way over-the-counter or [prescription medications](#) do, and the contents can vary widely among products and brands.

In one [study](#), researchers found that melatonin ranged from less than one-half to more than four times the amount stated on the label. Chewable tablets had particularly significant variability. Some of the supplements even contained other chemicals that require medical prescriptions.

"Because many sleep difficulties children experience can be fixed with [behavioral changes](#), parents should help their child establish consistent bedtime routines and practice [good sleep hygiene](#) first, before turning to melatonin," Dr. M. Adeel Rishi, chair of the AASM Public Safety Committee, said in an academy news release.

"If considering melatonin use, parents should consult with a health care

professional before giving the supplement to their child to ensure proper dosage and timing," he advised.

In addition to discussing melatonin with a [health care](#) provider before offering it to your child, keep your own melatonin out of reach of children.

The academy offers these tips to parents to help their kids get good sleep:

- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule, with the same bed and wake times each day, including on weekends.
- Limit screen time before bed to help your child's body prepare to sleep. Encourage unplugging from all devices at least 30 minutes to an hour before bedtime.
- Develop a relaxing nighttime routine that may include a warm bath or shower, journaling or reading.

## More information

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