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[NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.]

Does Melatonin Really Improve Your Sleep?

Do you have trouble sleeping? If so, you're like the 50–70 million Americans that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates have sleep or wakefulness disorders. To say that sleep is essential for good health is an understatement, which is why those of us who have trouble sleeping are always on the lookout for solutions.

One touted solution you may have heard of is melatonin, a supplement that some claim wards off jet lag and sleep issues. But, does it really help do that? First, let's get the scoop on what this supplement is about, and then dive into the nitty-gritty data on whether or not it works.

What is melatonin?



Melatonin is a hormone that helps regulate your body's internal clock, which drives your sleep and wake cycles. Your brain naturally produces melatonin in response to a lack of light at night. As your melatonin level peaks around bedtime, you become groggy and drift off to sleep. However, most of us live in a brightly lit world surrounded by artificial light, and phone, computer and television screens, which can affect our body's natural production of melatonin.

5 Ways Melatonin Supplements Can Improve Your Sleep

Some research suggests that taking a melatonin supplement at the right time might help treat jet lag, insomnia or other sleep disruptions. Melatonin can also reduce the time it takes to fall asleep, although this effect is typically mild.

It might also play an important role with pain. How? Pain can reduce both the length and quality of sleep, and poor sleep can increase the experience of pain. Promoting good, restful sleep can minimize the experience of pain as you heal. Sleep also is important to the healing process. Healthy levels of melatonin during sleep act as an antioxidant and can help support the overall process of normal healing. To summarize, melatonin supplements can support you in several ways:

1. **Decrease the time to fall asleep***
2. **Improve the ability to stay asleep***
3. **Enhance the depth of sleep***
4. **Help maintain normal circadian rhythms***
5. **Act as an antioxidant to support health and healing***

4 Essential Things to Know About Getting More Melatonin

Thinking about a melatonin supplement? Here are 4 things you should know:

1. Keep an eye out for dose. An amount of bedtime melatonin as low as 0.3 mg has been shown to help improve sleep quality. Daily amounts in the range of 3–10 mg are more commonly used.
2. Know your source. Depending on your preference, you can get more melatonin via supplements or through food. Small amounts of melatonin are found in foods such as walnuts, corn and asparagus. Some research suggests that the concentrated juice of the tart cherry (also known as sour or Montmorency cherry) is a good source, although the research is conflicting.
3. Be aware of side effects. When taken as suggested, side effects from a melatonin supplement are uncommon. Possible melatonin side effects include daytime sleepiness, headaches and dizziness. Other, less common melatonin side effects include abdominal discomfort, mild anxiety, irritability, confusion and short-lasting feelings of depression.
4. Keep your health history in mind. If you are considering a melatonin supplement, then check with your health-care professional first, especially if you are pregnant, have a health condition or are taking other medications. Melatonin supplements can interact with blood thinning medications, diabetes medications, immunosuppressant and birth control pills.

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