

# Melatonin

---

This sheet is about exposure to melatonin in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

## ***What is melatonin?***

Melatonin is a hormone made by the body that helps with the natural sleep-wake cycle (called circadian rhythm). Melatonin is made by the body mostly during periods of darkness in the night. During pregnancy, the body typically makes more melatonin. Studies suggest that melatonin levels are highest in the third trimester of pregnancy and levels are expected to return to normal after delivery.

Melatonin is also available as a supplement sold over the counter. Taking melatonin supplements during pregnancy has not been well studied. In general, it is suggested to speak with your healthcare provider before taking any supplements. Many supplements are not recommended for use during pregnancy unless your healthcare provider has prescribed them to treat a medical condition. This is because they are not well-regulated nor studied for use in pregnancy. For more detail on supplements, please see the fact sheet at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/herbal-products-pregnancy/>.

## ***I take melatonin. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?***

It is not known if taking melatonin supplements can make it harder to get pregnant.

## ***Does taking melatonin increase the chance for miscarriage?***

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Studies have not been done to see if taking melatonin supplements increases the chance for miscarriage.

## ***Does taking melatonin increase the chance of birth defects?***

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Studies have not been done in humans to see if melatonin supplements increase the chance for birth defects above the background risk. Animal studies did not suggest an increased chance for birth defects.

## ***Does taking melatonin in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?***

Studies have not been done to see if taking melatonin supplements can increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems, such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth).

## ***Does taking melatonin in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?***

Studies have not been done to see if taking melatonin supplements can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

## ***Breastfeeding while taking melatonin:***

Melatonin made by the body is present in breastmilk in higher amounts at night. Taking melatonin supplements while breastfeeding has not been well studied. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

## ***If a male takes melatonin, could it affect fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?***

Based on the studies reviewed, it is not known if melatonin supplements could affect fertility or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

**Please click [here](#) to view references.**

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).**

---

Disclaimer: MotherToBaby Fact Sheets are meant for general information purposes and should not replace the advice of your health care provider. MotherToBaby is a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). *OTIS/MotherToBaby recognizes that not all people identify as “men” or “women.” When using the term “mother,” we mean the source of the egg and/or uterus and by “father,” we mean the source of the sperm, regardless of the person’s gender identity.* Copyright by OTIS, June 1, 2022.