

# SLEEP MEDICATIONS



The decision to use medication to treat your child's sleep problems should be made with guidance and input from your medical provider. Often, sleep problems can be addressed through non-medication interventions, including good sleep hygiene practices and lifestyle modifications. Oftentimes, your neurology provider may not feel that it is wise to prescribe medicine for sleep, and will suggest non-medication alternatives. They may also suggest evaluation by a qualified pediatric speech specialist.

However, in some cases, your neurology provider may suggest medicine as a means to establish healthy sleep patterns in your child. Not every medicine listed below is necessarily appropriate or safe for your child. You should discuss the potential risks and benefits of the medicines listed below with your healthcare provider.

## Melatonin \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night

**What is it?** Melatonin is a hormone that the body releases each night to help promote sleep. The body typically releases this hormone when the sun goes down, however it is suggested we release less of this hormone due to the amount of man-made light in our current living environment.

**What do we use it for?** This hormone helps to maintain a normal sleep-wake cycle. Melatonin does not cause drowsiness but instead promotes our ability to reach sleep when in the correct sleep environment.

**How is it given?** Melatonin should be given 30-90 minutes prior to bedtime. It is available over-the-counter at your local drug store in both liquid and tablet form.

## Benadryl \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night

**What is it?** Benadryl (diphenhydramine) is an antihistamine with sedative like properties.

**What do we use it for?** Benadryl has been studied extensively in adults, and has been shown to have good effects in treating sleep related problems. Do not use Benadryl to help with sleep disorders without consulting your medical provider first.

**How is it given?** Benadryl should be given just prior to bedtime. It is available over-the-counter at your local drug store in both liquid and tablet form. Common side effects are drowsiness and disorientation. In some cases people experience hyperactivity and irritability.

## Clonidine \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night

**What is it?** Clonidine is in a class of medications called centrally acting alpha-agonist hypotensive agents. It is commonly used to treat patients with high blood pressure.

**What do we use it for?** Clonidine is also shown to be useful in treating sleep problems in children on stimulant therapy.

**How is it given?** Clonidine should be given just prior to bedtime. It is available by prescription only in both liquid and tablet form. Common side effects include irritability, sedation, low heart rate, and low blood pressure. Caution should be used when stopping this medication as it can cause high blood pressure to occur.

## Neurontin \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night

**What is it?** Neurontin (gabapentin) is known as an anticonvulsant or antiepileptic medication.

**What do we use it for?** Neurontin is often used to help treat seizures, nerve pain or to help maintain sleep.

**How is it given?** Neurontin should be taken before bedtime. It is available by prescription only in liquid and tablet form. Common side effects include drowsiness, dizziness, loss of coordination, fatigue, blurred/double vision, unusual eye movements, or shaking (tremor).



# SLEEP MEDICATIONS



## **Periactin \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night**

**What is it?** Periactin (cyproheptadine) is another type of antihistamine that is most often used to treat headaches in children.

**What do we use it for?** Periactin is often used to help with sleep related problems in children.

**How is it given?** Periactin should be given just prior to bedtime. It is available by prescription only in both liquid and tablet form. Common side effects include increased appetite, dizziness, drowsiness, increased heart rate, dry mouth and constipation.

## **Seroquel \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night**

**What is it?** Seroquel (quetiapine) is an antagonist to dopamine and serotonin in the brain.

**What do we use it for?** Seroquel is a mood stabilizer, but is also often used to help with sleep related problems in children.

**How is it given?** Seroquel should be given just prior to bedtime. It is available by prescription only and is only available in tablet form. Common side effects include increased heart rate, dizziness, fever, difficulty breathing, fatigue, nausea, and changed in mental status. This medication can have chemical interaction with many other medications so make sure to discuss all of your child's medications with your medical provider prior to starting this treatment.

## **Trazodone \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night**

**What is it?** Trazodone is an antidepressant with sedative-like properties that inhibits serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake in the brain.

**What do we use it for?** Trazodone is often used to help with sleep related problems in children.

**How is it given?** Trazodone should be taken with food. It is available by prescription only in liquid and tablet form. It may take up to 2-3 weeks before the medication begins to take full effect. Common side effects include headache, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, and changes in mental status.

## **Zyprexa \_\_\_\_\_ mg \_\_\_\_\_ each night**

**What is it?** Zyprexa (olanzapine) is an atypical antipsychotic medication that affects dopamine and serotonin in the brain.

**What do we use it for?** Zyprexa, while commonly a mood stabilizer, is often used to help with sleep related problems in children.

**How is it given?** Zyprexa should be taken before bedtime. It is available by prescription only in liquid and tablet form. Common side effects include drowsiness, dizziness, lightheadedness, stomach upset, dry mouth, constipation, increased appetite, or weight gain.

### References:

<http://www.webmd.com/drugs/index-drugs.aspx> (use search function)

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/sleep/sleep.html>

<http://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep>

