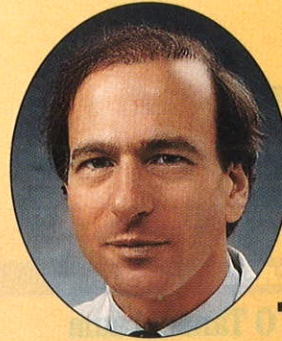


To Sleep or Not



Dr. Bradley Connor

Q I've heard that melatonin is a great way to combat jet lag. Is there any scientific proof that it works?

The Doctor Says:
Some people report a

favorable response to melatonin, a hormone produced by the pineal gland of the brain, but it is not a cure-all for jet lag.

Commercially produced melatonin appears to be safe even in high dosages, but its effects still are being investigated.

It has been tested in dosages up to 1,500 mg without evidence of significant human toxicity, but possible side effects include drowsiness, abdominal cramps, headache and nausea.

Most scientific studies on the effect of melatonin on jet lag symptoms have used dosages ranging from 2 mg to 10 mg.

Currently available melatonin is not licensed or supervised by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Melatonin is not considered a drug — it is marketed in the U.S. as a dietary supplement — and various preparations may be more or less effective than others.

Research on melatonin has used pharmaceutically pure preparations that are not available to the general public.

Additionally, there is significant variability from one person to another in absorption of melatonin into the bloodstream.

The same dose of melatonin may have a stronger effect on one person than another, which makes it hard to predict correct dosage.

Dr. Bradley Connor is a specialist in travel medicine, a member of the faculty at the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center and medical director of Travel Health Services in New York.