

Melatonin Improves Asthma-Disturbed Sleep

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - In women with mild or moderate asthma, melatonin improves sleep without affecting asthma symptoms, according to a report from Brazil.

Melatonin treatment has already been shown to improve sleep quality in healthy adults, the authors explain in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, and some reports suggest it can do so for hospitalized patients with breathing disorders.

Dr. Pedro F. C. de Bruin and colleagues from Universidade Federal do Ceara, Fortaleza, evaluated the effects of four weeks of treatment with melatonin (3 milligrams taken 2 hours before bedtime) compared with placebo treatment in 22 women with mild or moderate asthma.

"To our knowledge," the researchers write, "this is the first study on melatonin and sleep in patients with asthma."

Eight patients in each group were classified as "poor sleepers" at the start of the study.

Women who were given melatonin had significant improvements in quality of sleep, took a shorter amount of time falling asleep, and slept longer.

"Our results showed a somnogenic effect of melatonin during the entire study period," de Bruin told Reuters Health. "Further studies are needed before melatonin can be safely recommend for asthmatic patients," he added.

There were no significant differences between the groups in peak expiratory flow rate, symptoms of asthma, or the number of times they had to use an asthma inhaler during the four weeks of treatment, the team found.

"Contrary to what had been previously speculated by others, melatonin (did) not adversely affect pulmonary function and asthma symptoms," de Bruin said.

"Sleep complaints should be actively investigated in asthmatic patients," he concluded. "Melatonin is a promising agent to improve sleep quality in these patients."