

Study seeks sweet sleep relief for children with ADHD

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Credit: istock image

Parents of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are hoping a University of Queensland trial could help their families get a decent night's sleep.

Researchers are recruiting participants for the study into the effectiveness of the natural hormone melatonin for [children](#) with ADHD who are struggling at bedtime.

UQ School of Medicine's Dr Jane Nikles said stimulant medication used to help ADHD symptoms could exacerbate [sleep](#) problems, with some parents reporting young children regularly still awake at midnight.

"ADHD is a very complex disorder, and these children often have difficulty settling down in the evening," Dr Nikles said.

"This can be complicated by medications used to treat ADHD, including stimulants such as Ritalin and Dexamphetamine.

"We are investigating whether taking melatonin could make a difference for these children,

because sleep is so important for healthy body and brain development."

Researchers are seeking participants aged between six and 17, who have a diagnosis of ADHD, are being treated with [stimulant medication](#) and are experiencing [sleep difficulties](#).

General practitioners and paediatricians all over Australia can refer patients for the study, which involves an individual medication effectiveness test.

Dr Nikles said sleeping activity would be monitored for two weeks in the first phase of the trial.

"Children will then be given either melatonin or a placebo, in blocks of one week each, for six weeks.

"Parents will keep a sleep diary and complete some questionnaires, and children will wear an activity watch to help measure their sleep activity."

Brisbane mother Marnie Goldsmith said melatonin helped her 14-year-old son.

"Caleb was able to get a little bit more sleep and it was enough to make a difference to his performance at school," Ms Goldsmith said.

"The great thing about the study is that parents find out when their child finishes the trial whether or not melatonin helped."

Provided by University of Queensland

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