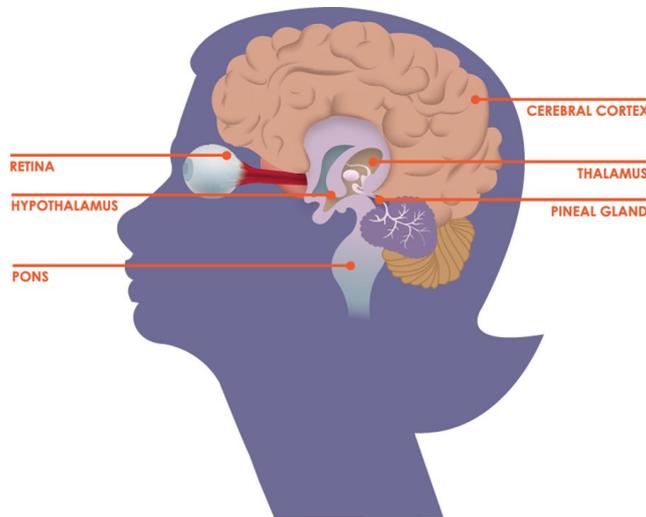


# Melatonin

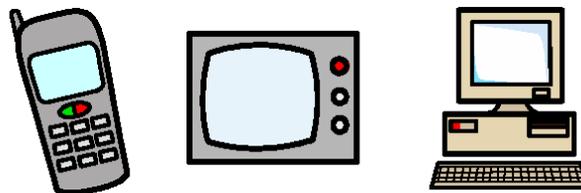
Melatonin is a natural hormone made by your body's pineal (pih-knee-uhl) gland. This is a pea-sized gland located just above the middle of the brain.



When the sun goes down and it starts to become dark, the pineal gland is "turned on" and begins to produce melatonin, which is released into the blood. Usually, this occurs around 9 pm. This causes melatonin levels in the blood to increase sharply. This causes you begin to feel less alert. Melatonin levels in the blood stay elevated all through the night.



As the pineal is "turned on" when light turns to dark using screens such a computers TVs and mobile phones can affect the way the pineal glands produces melatonin making it harder for you to fall asleep.



It is a good idea not to take your mobile phone up to bed with you so that you are not tempted to use it and it does not cause a distraction. Using mobile phones before bed can be stimulating to your brain and the light from the screen affects the body's natural production of melatonin.

Certain foods provide a naturally rich source of Melatonin:

- Oats
- Sweet Corn
- Rice
- Ginger
- Tomatoes
- Barley
- Banana "Smoothie"
- Cup of Tomato soup
- Bowl of corn flakes (with warm full-cream milk, an hour before bedtime)



A naturally occurring chemical, Tryptophan is one of the building blocks of Melatonin and foods that are rich in Tryptophan include:

- Cottage cheese
- Instant breakfast cereals (made with full cream milk)
- Chicken and turkey
- Nuts (Almonds and Peanuts)
- Milk (full cream)
- Ice-cream
- Yoghurt



Avoiding foods that contain caffeine can also help as caffeine can help keep us awake. It can also stop the natural production of melatonin. Examples of food containing caffeine are:

- Coffee
- Tea
- Energy drinks
- Hot chocolate
- Chocolate / chocolate biscuits

