

The Pineal Gland

The pineal gland is a small cone-shaped gland in the center of the brain that produces the hormone melatonin. Melatonin is important in regulating your sleep-wake cycle. Light striking the retina of your eye causes a chemical reaction that results in the production of melatonin by the pineal gland. The pineal gland has been a mystery for centuries. Aristotle called it the “seat of the soul” and said that it was the source of “spiritual vision.”

Today we know that the pineal gland is neuroendocrine—that is, it produces hormones and is influenced by the nervous system. It is very sensitive to light and is the main source of circadian rhythm (sleep-wake cycle). The pineal gland is located just above the middle of the brain, between the two hemispheres. It is about the size of a pea.

How Does the Pineal Gland Affect Your Sleep

The pineal gland is responsible for producing melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate sleep and wakefulness. Light cues from the eye signal the pineal gland to produce melatonin or stop releasing melatonin. Your melatonin levels usually peak at night when it's dark, which helps you to feel sleepy.

How Does the Pineal Gland Affect Your Dreams

Melatonin is well-known for being responsible for the regular timing of your sleep cycle, thus allowing you to wake up both refreshed and energized. Researchers have discovered that it is also the precursor that allows your brain to erase memories while you sleep as well as while you're dreaming, which makes it responsible for dream control.

Thus, if one takes supplemental melatonin each night before bed, they are more likely to experience longer periods of REM sleep, which will give them much less vivid dreams and a better ability to remember those dreams upon waking.

Pineal Gland and Depression

Melatonin, a sleep-related hormone secreted by the pineal gland in the brain, has been linked to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This hormone not only occurs when the environment is dark and the days are shorter, but it also increases during the winter months. Increased melatonin levels in the body have been shown to cause depression-like symptoms.

Pineal Gland and Melatonin

If you have trouble sleeping, it might be because your pineal gland isn't releasing enough melatonin. Some alternative medicine practitioners claim that detoxing and activating your pineal gland will help you sleep better and open your third eye. However, there is no scientific evidence to back up these assertions.

Melatonin pills are one approach to managing the amount of melatonin in your body. These will usually make you fatigued. If you've been traveling to a foreign time zone or working a night shift, they may be able to assist you to realign your circadian rhythm. Supplements may also assist you in falling asleep faster.