

Information Guide for ADHD Medications

Progeny Psychiatric Clinic

WHAT ARE STIMULANTS USED FOR?

ADHD stimulants are used to help those diagnosed with ADHD by improving cognitive and executive functioning skills such as attention span, impulsive control, and hyperactivity.



HOW DO THEY WORK?

ADHD medications are available as **stimulants** and **non-stimulants**. They both help to boost levels of brain chemicals such as *norepinephrine* and *dopamine* and help the brain's nerves talk to one another which helps improve energy, focus, and keeps you alert.

WHEN WILL IT START WORKING?

Non-stimulant ADHD medication may take several weeks before you notice any change in your symptoms, and often need 4-6 weeks for full effects.

Stimulant ADHD medications are available as short, intermediate, and long-acting formulas but should be effective the same day you take it but have variations in how long they last depending on the formula.



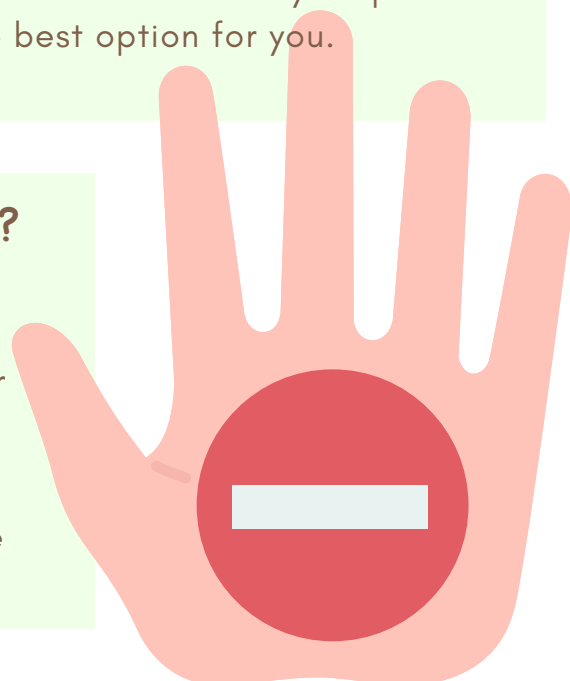
HOW OFTEN DO I TAKE THEM?

Non-stimulant ADHD medications must be taken every day to maintain a steady drug level. Abruptly stopping them may lead to uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms and it is recommended that you wean off slowly.

Stimulant ADHD medications are often taken daily, but some individuals only use them when they need it for activities such as work or school. Talk to your prescriber about what may be the best option for you.

WHO SHOULDN'T TAKE STIMULANTS?

You should not take a stimulant if you have a history of underlying heart problems, glaucoma (build up of pressure in the eye), severe anxiety or agitation, psychosis, or have a history of tics, Tourette's Syndrome, or have been on a MAOI antidepressant within the last 14 days. If you have any of these, talk to your prescriber.



ARE STIMULANTS ADDICTIVE?

Stimulants are not typically habit-forming in the doses used to treat children and adolescents with ADHD. There is still a potential for abuse and addiction with these drugs and this should be taken into consideration. Studies have shown that people with ADHD that are treated with stimulants have lower rates of substance use compared to those with ADHD and are untreated. Long-term use of stimulants may cause your body to build a tolerance and may require higher doses over time.

Side Effect Guide

ADHD Medication

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APPETITE AND WIEGHT LOSS

You may not feel as hungry when taking ADHD medication. Taking your medication after a meal can help. You should also consider supplementing your diet with nutrient-rich shakes or calorie-dense snacks if you are not hungry enough to eat a complete meal during the day. Your weight will be monitored as a part of your treatment. Notify your prescriber if you have excessive or unhealthy weight loss.



UPSET STOMACH

ADHD medication may cause brief abdominal discomfort. Taking your medication with or immediately following a meal may help. If abdominal discomfort is severe or does not go away, talk to your prescriber.



INSOMNIA

Both **stimulant** and **non-stimulant** medications can cause insomnia. Stimulants are more prone to causing trouble sleeping and are recommended to be taken early in the morning before you start your day. Avoid taking your stimulant too late in the day. Long-acting or timed-release stimulants may cause more insomnia than short or intermediate acting ones. Talk to your prescriber if you have trouble sleeping.



INCREASED BLOOD PRESSURE AND HEART RATE

ADHD medications may cause increases in your resting blood pressure and heart rate. Your prescriber will monitor your blood pressure regularly. If you experience severe lightheadedness, chest discomfort, palpitations (irregular heart beat), severe headache, or shortness of breath stop taking your stimulant and seek medical attention right away. If your blood pressure and/or heart rate is too high with your medication, your prescriber may adjust the dose or offer safer alternatives.

NERVOUSNESS/ANXIETY

ADHD medication may make you feel nervous, shaky, or even irritable. Your body will eventually adjust to these effects and it usually goes away. If this effect is severe, your prescriber may lower your dosage if you cannot tolerate it.



HEADACHE& DRY MOUTH

Headaches are a common side effect. They typically do not last more than 1-2 weeks and may be relieved with over-the-counter pain relievers such as Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or Motrin (Ibuprofen).

Make sure you drink plenty of water (8-10 glasses/day) when taking your ADHD medication to avoid becoming dehydrated or having excessive dry mouth.

Safety Guide for ADHD Medications

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PREGNANCY AND LACTATION

Stimulant ADHD medications have been associated with pregnancy related complications and birth defects. If you are pregnant or become pregnant, notify your prescriber to discuss the safest options for you while you are pregnant.

Generally speaking, there are no known risks of breastfeeding while taking stimulant or non-stimulant medications. There are still unforeseen risks and this should be discussed with your prescriber.



TICS

Tics are involuntary motor movements (twitches, jerks, blinking) or vocal utterances (grunting, clearing throat). Stimulants can aggravate underlying tic disorders. If you have a history of tics, notify your prescriber.

SUPPRESSION OF GROWTH IN CHILDREN

Some kids that take stimulants grow slower than others but it doesn't affect their final height.

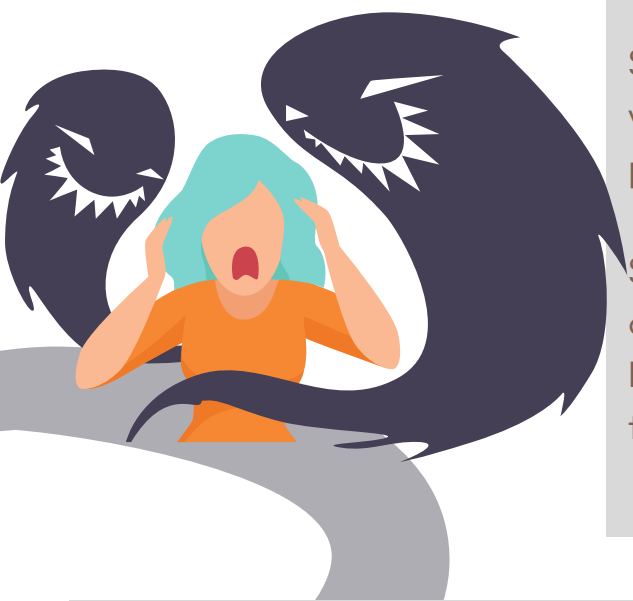
Your prescriber will monitor height and weight regularly as a part of treatment.



PSYCHIATRIC ADVERSE EVENTS

Stimulants can exacerbate psychosis in individuals with no prior history or for someone with pre-existing psychotic disorders.

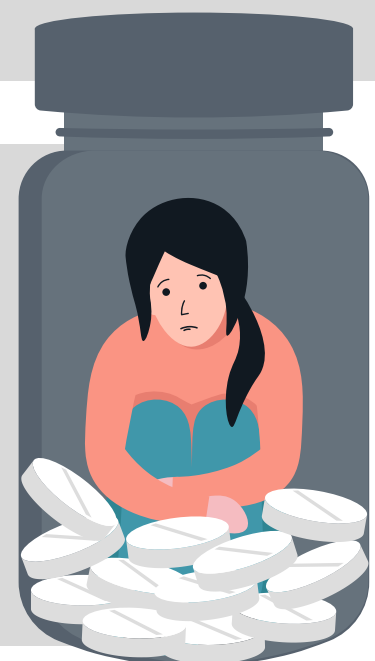
Stimulants have also been associated with aggression or abnormal behaviors. If you have a history of Bipolar Disorder, there is an increased risk of mania if you take stimulants.



ADDICTION AND ABUSE

While there is no real evidence of dependence for individuals taking stimulants at recommended doses, there still is a risk of addiction and abuse in those with a history of substance use or those at risk for substance use disorders. This should be taken into consideration before starting stimulants.

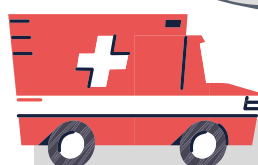
Never share ADHD medication and keep it in a secure place. Selling illicit ADHD medication is a felony and punishable with prison time.



SEIZURES

ADHD medications may lower the seizure threshold putting you at an increased risk for seizures. If you have a history of seizures, talk to your prescriber.

If you experience a seizure, seek emergent treatment.



SUDDEN DEATH

Stimulants have been associated with sudden death in children and adolescents with underlying cardiac abnormalities (arrhythmias, structural changes). Stimulants should not be used in those with serious heart problems.