

Learning About Stimulant Medicines for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



How are stimulant medicines used to treat ADHD?

Stimulant medicines affect certain chemicals in the brain. They can help a person with ADHD to focus better. And they can make the person less hyperactive and impulsive. ADHD is treated with medicines and behavior therapy. Stimulants are the medicines used most.

What are some types of these medicines?

Stimulant medicines may include:

- Dexmethylphenidate (Focalin).
- Lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse).
- Methylphenidate (Concerta, Daytrana, Metadate CD, Methylin, Ritalin).
- Mixed salts amphetamine (Adderall).

How do you take them safely?

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed.
Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicines your doctor prescribes.
- Do not take "make-up" doses.
If you miss a dose, and if it's not too late in the day, it's okay to take it. But don't double up doses.
- Do not misuse your medicine.

Some medicines for ADHD can be misused. Some people may take a larger dose than prescribed. They may take them for their non-medical effects. Or they may share or sell them. Misuse can lead to a stimulant use disorder.

- Keep close track of your medicine.
Don't sell or give medicine to other people.

What are the side effects?

Common side effects include loss of appetite, a headache, and an upset stomach. You may also have mood changes or sleep problems. Or you may feel nervous.

Some stimulant medicines can cause a dry mouth.

If these medicines have bothersome side effects or don't work for you, your doctor might prescribe another type of medicine.

How long can you expect to use these medicines?

Most doctors prescribe a low dose of stimulant medicines at first. Your doctor may have you slowly increase the dose until your symptoms are managed. Or you might get a different medicine or treatment. This can take several weeks.

Some doctors may advise taking a break from the medicine over some weekends or during holidays. But this depends on the type of symptoms you have.

You may need to take medicine for ADHD for a long time. But your doctor will check now and then to see if you can take a lower dose and still get the benefits of the medicine.

If you want to stop or reduce your use of the medicine, talk to your doctor first. Some signs that you may be able to lower or stop your dose include:

- You have no symptoms for more than a year while you take the medicine.
- You are doing better at the same dose.
- Your behavior is appropriate even if you miss a dose or two.
- You are newly able to concentrate.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **S155** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Stimulant Medicines for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**".

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