



ADHD

Medicines to help
symptoms of adult
attention deficit
hyperactivity
disorder (ADHD)



This guide can help you to make a more informed choice about which medication may be best for you if you have been diagnosed with adult ADHD and offered treatment with medicines.

A member of the adult ADHD service will be happy to discuss anything included in this guide with you.

Why have I been prescribed medicines for adult ADHD?

People with ADHD often experience a number of symptoms including difficulty sustaining attention, hyperactivity and restlessness/impulsivity. You may have been prescribed medications to help with these symptoms.

What medicines are available?

Medications may help with these symptoms and effects of ADHD and help you get your life back on track.

There are currently two classes of medications that you may be prescribed:

Stimulant medication (amphetamine based)	Non-stimulant
Methylphenidate (Concerta®, Medikinet®, Equasym® and Ritalin®)	Atomoxetine (Strattera®) Guanfacine (Intuniv®)
Dexamphetamine sulphate Lisdexamfetamine (Elvanse®/Elvanse Adult)	

These medicines (except atomoxetine and lisdexamfetamine) are not currently licensed to be used in people over 18 because research about their use is still being produced. Your psychiatrist can still prescribe these medications but will explain to you what this means.

Concerta XL (a brand of methylphenidate) is licensed for adults who were prescribed this medication in childhood and who continue to have good results in adulthood. Lisdexamfetamine and atomoxetine are licensed for adults who have a diagnosis of ADHD but were not necessarily prescribed these treatments in childhood.

How do these medications work?

Medications for the symptoms of ADHD vary in how they work. The stimulants 'boost' one of the brain's chemical messengers called dopamine. The non-stimulants work by 'boosting' a chemical messenger called noradrenaline. Both messengers have been linked to the control of attention and impulses. Medicines can help the brain concentrate on a task for longer and prevent it being distracted.

A care plan for adult ADHD may include some or all of the following: medication, support from a psychologist, occupational therapist, specialist nurse and/or social worker.

Are these medications safe to take?

These medications are normally safe to take but you should let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you:

- Epilepsy, heart, liver or kidney trouble or glaucoma
- If you take any other medications prescribed by another doctor, bought over the counter and alternative remedies e.g. herbal medicines
- If you are pregnant or breast-feeding or wish to become pregnant

Which medication will be offered to me?

A healthcare professional will discuss medication options with you. However, these will depend on a number of circumstances including:

- Whether you have other conditions e.g. Tourette's syndrome, tics or epilepsy
- Side effects from medication
- Dosing frequency of medication.
- If you are prescribed any other medications
- Your preference
- Which medication works best for you

If you want to know more about your medication, visit www.choiceandmedication.org

Leaflets are available on each medication so please ask for one.

How long should I take the medication for?

Your medication will be reviewed by a specialist every year although you will need to decide what works for you. The medicines do not 'cure' ADHD, they just help with the symptoms.

What times of the day will the medications work?

There are different formulations of methylphenidate and this determines how long they stay in the body. For example, Ritalin or Dexamphetamine are immediate release tablets and their effect wears off in a few hours after taking them. This means your doctor will ask you to take it two or three times a day, giving you the ability to control when the maximum effect of the medication takes place.

There are also slow-release tablets which include Equasym XL, Medikinet XL or Concerta XL. The effects of these tablets will last longer so your doctor will usually ask you to take the tablets once a day. Atomoxetine can be taken once or twice a day and for most people is effective for the duration of the day.

The table below offers more explanation.

Medication	Dosage	How quickly does the medication work?
Methylphenidate tablets (immediate release)	Usually prescribed two to three times daily	Usually takes one to two hours to start working
Concerta XL (methylphenidate slow release)	Usually prescribed once daily. Effects last for 12 hours	Usually takes one to two hours to start working
Equasym XL (methylphenidate slow release)	Usually prescribed once daily. Effects last for eight hours	Usually takes one to two hours to start working
Medikinet XL (methylphenidate slow release)	Usually prescribed once daily. Effects last for eight hours	Usually takes one to two hours to start working
Dexamphetamine tablets (immediate release)	Usually prescribed three to four times daily. Effects last for three to four hours	Usually takes one to two hours to start working
Atomoxetine	Usually prescribed once or twice daily. Effects usually last all day	Usually takes two to four weeks to start working
Lisdexamfetamine	Usually prescribed once daily in the morning. Effects usually last all day	Usually takes one to two hours to start working
Guanfacine (slow release)	Usually prescribed once daily in the morning	Usually takes up to a week to start working

Possible side effects of ADHD medication

There are some possible side effects that can occur when taking ADHD medication, however these generally wear off after the first few weeks.

Your doctor will regularly monitor your weight, heart rate and blood pressure as well as any side effects you may experience. If you do suffer from any side effects your doctor may reduce, stop or change your medication.

You will need to keep a record of changes in symptoms and/or behaviour when you start medication or when the dose is changed.

Possible side effects include:

Side effect	Common with methylphenidate and dexamphetamine	Common with atomoxetine	Common with guanfacine
Not being able to get to sleep	✓	✓	✓
Not feeling hungry	✓	✓	✓
Feeling sick or being sick or stomach pain	✓	✓	✓
Headache	✓	✓	✓
Feeling more anxious or nervous	✓		
Cough, sore nose and throat	✓		
Feeling angry irritable or low	✓	✓	
Feeling dizzy	✓	✓	✓
Joint pain/muscle twitching	✓		
Constipation		✓	✓
Rash	✓	✓	
Feeling tired	✓	✓	✓
Weight gain			✓
Increases blood pressure and pulse	✓	✓	
Decreases blood pressure and pulse			✓

Stopping your medication

If you are thinking of stopping your medication it is advisable to discuss this with your doctor or a healthcare professional beforehand.

Further information

Information leaflets on each ADHD medication can be found on the Choice and Medication website.

www.choiceandmedication.org/swyp

For more detailed information, please contact South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's adult ADHD team on 01924 316494.

Useful contacts

adders.org

0871 590 3693

www.adders.org

ADDISS

020 895 22800

www.addiss.co.uk

AADDUK

01934 863 556

www.aadd.org.uk

Complex Minds

01934 863 556

www.aadd.org.uk

MIND

0845 766 0163

www.mind.org.uk

West Yorkshire ADHD Support Group

www.west-yorkshire-adhd.org.uk



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