

New Medication for ADD/ADHD
Parent Information

Your child is being prescribed a medication for ADD/ADHD. It is very important that we have regular follow up to discuss benefits, side effects and ensure best coverage for your child. You will need to be seen within **30 days** of your initial prescription and then regular visits after that. The interval of these visits will be determined by your provider but generally range between 1-6 months.

Since every child is different. The right medication, dose, and time to take the medication will depend on many factors including your child's body, how long the medication lasts, any side effects of the medication, and your child's daily schedule.

Is my child on the right medication?

You and your child's doctor may need to contact each other weekly for the next several weeks to determine the answer to this question. During the week, you should ask yourself:

- Are my child's behaviors getting better? Are any behaviors getting worse?
- How long is the medication lasting? Are there any times when my child's behavior is particularly better or worse?
- Are there any side effects I need to tell the doctor about?

You also need to ask your child's teacher the same questions. One way to know if a medication is the right medication is if you can see a change in your child. Positive changes in your child's behavior will be easy to see if your child has the Hyperactive Subtype of ADHD. The positive effects of medication may be more difficult for you to see if your child has the Inattentive Subtype of ADHD. You are usually able to see results in your child's schoolwork and self-esteem over time as the positive effects build on themselves.

Another way we can tell if your child is on the right medication is if your child has very few side effects. Your doctor will be working with you to watch for any side effects your child may be having. Within eight weeks, your child should have found a medication that works well for him/her, does not lead to serious side effects, and is given at the appropriate dose and time.

Is my child taking the right amount?

If you and your child's teacher are wondering if the medication is working, it probably isn't. The dose may need to be increased or, if your child is taking more than one dose each day, then the doses may be too far apart.

Is my child taking the medication at the right time?

Some stimulants are short-acting and are taken two to three times per day. Others are long-acting and may need to be taken only once a day. If your child is on a medication that is short-acting, you and your doctor will need to determine when your child should be taking the medication during the day. If your child is on a long-acting medication, he/she may need a second small dose in the late afternoon or evening. Both Strattera and Intuniv must be taken daily, even during non-school days and holidays, and at relatively the same time every day.

Is the medication doing what it is supposed to do?

Between 70-80% of children with ADHD respond positively to stimulant medications by increasing their attention span, reducing their impulsivity, and improving on-task behavior. Some children also show improvement in frustration tolerance, handwriting and relationships with peers, family and teachers. Medication, however, does not help all aspects of a child's behavior that are difficult. Like all people, a child's personality will determine to a large part how he interacts with others. Although medication may increase compliance by helping a child think before acting or by increasing his ability to pay attention, medications generally do not alter a child's basic temperament, personality or motivation.

What side effects can this medicine have?

Any medication may have side effects. Because each patient is different, your doctor will work with you to get the most positive effects and the fewest negative effects from the medication. This list may not include rare or unusual side effects. Please talk to the doctor if you suspect the medication is causing a problem.

Common side effects – these often go away after about 2 weeks or if the dose is lowered by the doctor.

- Decreased appetite: encourage a good breakfast and afternoon and evening snacks; give medicine after meals, rather than before.
- Trouble falling asleep
- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Jittery or shaky
- Irritability, crankiness
- Crying, emotional sensitivity
- Staring into space
- Rapid pulse or increased blood pressure
- Rarely, as the medicine wears off, hyperactivity or bad moods are worse than before the medicine was started: this is called “rebound” and the doctor can make dosage adjustments to help this problem
- A few children may not grow quite as fast as usual, which is why the height and weight are checked regularly. Growth usually catches up if the medicine is stopped.
- Occasional nervous habits (like picking at skin, or stuttering) may appear.

Serious side effects- tell the doctor right away

- Muscle tics or twitches, jerking movements
- Severe sadness or depression which lasts more than a few days
- Suicidal thoughts
- Any behavior which is very unusual for your child

What could happen if this medicine is stopped suddenly?

There are no medical problems in stopping the stimulant medications suddenly. Some youth may experience irritability, trouble sleeping, or increased hyperactivity for a day or two if they have been on daily medication for a long time, especially at above-average doses. Sometimes it is better to stop the medication gradually, over a week or so. We do not recommend stopping Strattera or Intuniv suddenly. These meds need to be tapered down per your Doctor’s guidelines.

How long will this medicine be needed?

There is no way to know how long a person will need to take medicine for ADD/ADHD. The parent, the doctor, and the school will work together to find out what is right for each young person. Sometimes the medicine is needed for only a few years, but some people may need to continue meds through college and even as adults.

What else should I know about this medicine?

- Many people have incorrect information about this medicine. If you hear anything that worries you, please check with your doctor.
- The medicine does not cause addiction, but it **is illegal** to share, sell or give away.
- This medicine does not stop working at puberty.
- Some young people take this medicine three times a day, every day. Others only need to take it once or twice a day and only on school days. You and the doctor will work out what is best.
- It is important not to chew Sustained Release tablets because this releases too much medicine at once. Some capsules can be opened up and sprinkled and still keep their sustained release, others cannot. Discuss with your doctor your options.
- If the medicine seems to stop working, it may be because it is not being given regularly, because your child has gained weight and needs a higher dose, or because something at school, home or in the neighborhood is upsetting your child. Please discuss your concerns with your doctor.
- The combination of this medicine with other medications can be done safely. However, it is also important to notify your doctor of all medications, supplements, or vitamins that you are taking.
- It is not a good idea to take this medicine along with nasal decongestants (e.g. pseudoephedrine, phenylephrine) or other combo cold medicines because rapid pulse or high blood pressure may develop.
- Do not mix stimulant medications with excessive caffeine or energy drinks.