

Frequently Asked Questions About Medication Used in the Treatment of ADHD

How long will it take to notice if the medication is working for my child?

Stimulant medications can start working within thirty to sixty minutes. However, finding the right dose and medication schedule for your child can take several weeks or even months. Your healthcare provider may start with a lower dose to see if there are side effects, and some children don't show any effects until a higher dose is tried.

Nonstimulant medications usually take longer to work. Some may begin to help within one to two weeks, but it can take four to eight weeks to see their full effect. Because ADHD medications affect each person differently, your child may need to try more than one medication to find the best fit. Regular follow-up appointments can help their healthcare provider monitor progress and adjust treatment if needed.



As my child grows, will their dosage need to be changed?



Many adolescents and adults continue to do well on the same dose of medication. However, many others will require higher doses, especially if they started medication when they were young, since factors like body size and metabolism can affect how the medication works. Some children may respond well initially to a low dose of medication and then require a modest dose increase after a few weeks or months.

Does my child only need to take medication while they are in school?

Children can often benefit from medication outside of school because it can help them complete their homework and help them succeed socially and at home. Medication can also be helpful for children who participate in organized sports and activities that require them to stay focused for longer periods of time. ADHD symptoms can vary depending on the situation. Some children experience fewer bothersome symptoms in certain environments or while participating in activities they enjoy, and they may do well without medication.

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My child did not respond well to medication. Are there other treatment options available?

If the first ADHD medication does not work well, the healthcare provider may recommend trying one or two other stimulant medications before deciding whether stimulants are not a good option for your child. If stimulant medications do not work well or cause bothersome side effects, your child's doctor may recommend trying nonstimulant medications, including some antidepressant medications. Most individuals respond positively to medication treatment. Some individuals, because of the severity of their symptoms or the presence of other conditions, will not respond well.

Behavioral treatment can also play an important role in managing ADHD symptoms and is the recommended treatment for children under six years of age. Behavioral parent training teaches parents practical strategies to encourage positive behaviors, establish consistent routines, and respond effectively to challenging behaviors. Behavioral supports at school, such as classroom accommodations, organizational strategies, and positive reinforcement, can also help children succeed. For many children, the best results come from a combination of medication and behavioral interventions.

If a child or teen does not respond well to several different medications, a re-evaluation may be needed to confirm the correct

diagnosis and check for other conditions that can occur along with ADHD.

Are children who receive stimulant medication treatment more likely to have substance abuse problems later in life?

No. Research that followed children with ADHD over many years found that the appropriate use of stimulant medications does not increase the risk of later substance abuse. In fact, many studies show that individuals with ADHD who are not effectively treated with medication during childhood and adolescence have an increased risk of developing significant alcohol or drug abuse problems later in life. When treated, the risk of later drug or alcohol problems is the same as individuals who do not have ADHD.

Will my child need to take medication forever, even into adulthood?

ADHD symptoms often change as children grow and can be affected by changes in their environment. Some continue to benefit from medication into adulthood, while others find they need less support or no medication at all. Decisions about medication should be based on each individual's symptoms, the demands they face, and needs over time.