

Quick Facts:

Using Medication to Manage ADHD Symptoms

Medication can be an important part of ADHD treatment for adults. Medication may help reduce symptoms and improve attention and focus. Before medication is prescribed, a healthcare provider should confirm an ADHD diagnosis and screen for other possible conditions. Medication does not cure ADHD, but it helps manage symptoms. This quick fact will help you:

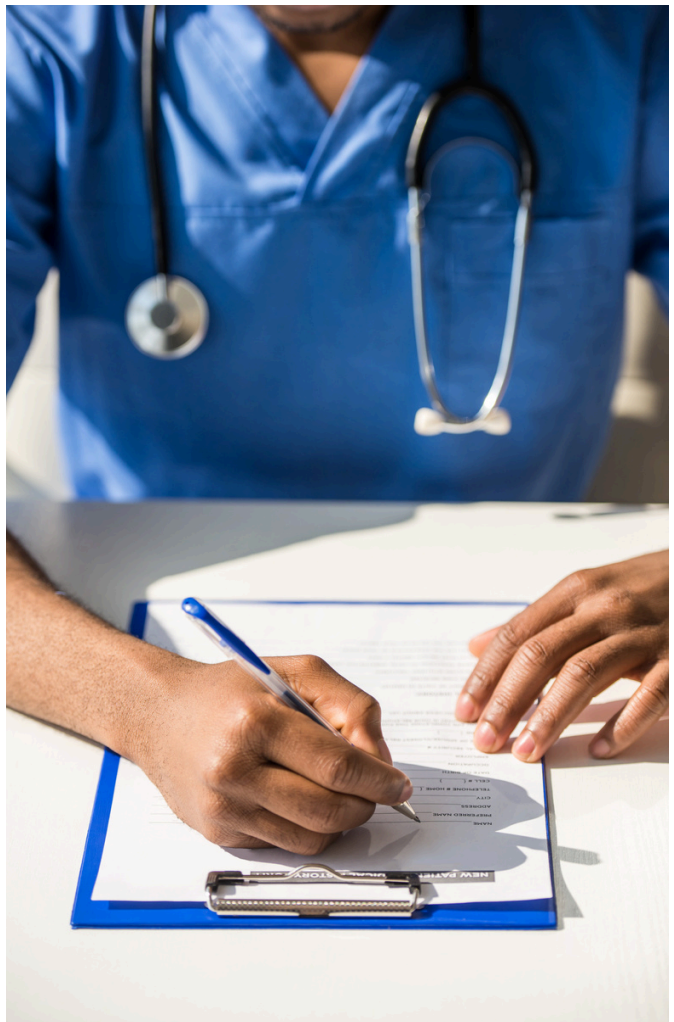
1. Understand how stimulant and nonstimulant medications work and possible side effects.
2. Learn how short-acting and long-acting medications work.
3. Understand which ADHD symptoms medications can improve.

Before starting medication, tell your healthcare provider about:

- Any medical conditions you have
- Other medications you take
- A personal or family history of:
 - Heart problems
 - Fainting
 - Agitation

Remember:

Finding the right medication and dose often takes time. Treatment usually starts with a low dose that is adjusted gradually based on symptom improvement and side effects. Some people also benefit from a small additional dose later in the day. Regular follow-up appointments are an important part of treatment.



(Continued on page 2)

Stimulant medications

Stimulants are the most widely used medications for managing ADHD symptoms. These medications increase the activity of certain brain chemicals (dopamine and/or norepinephrine) to work more effectively and can improve attention, focus, and self-control. Most adults experience some improvement in ADHD symptoms, although results vary from person to person. Some adults experience major improvements, while others notice only small changes or no benefit.

Medication works differently for each person; you may need to try more than one medication to find the best fit.

Common side effects for FDA-approved ADHD stimulants include:

- Trouble sleeping
- Decreased appetite
- Dry mouth
- Increased heart rate
- Headaches
- Increased blood pressure

Stimulants are regulated medications because they have the potential to be misused and therefore require careful monitoring and regular follow-up visits. They are available in short-acting (four hours) and long-acting forms (six to eight hours or all day). The type, dose, and schedule depend on the individual.

Long-acting medications are less likely to be misused and may:

- Help control symptoms for more of the day
- Reduce the need to take medication during work or school hours

Nonstimulant medications

Nonstimulants may be used when:

- Stimulants do not work well
- A person has experienced unacceptable side effects from stimulant medication, or has a risk condition that makes serious side effects likely
- A nonstimulant medication is preferred

They work differently than stimulants by changing how brain chemicals are used and may take longer to start working. For some people, nonstimulant medications work just as well as stimulants. In some cases, healthcare providers prescribe both types together.

Common side effects for FDA-approved ADHD nonstimulants include:

- Sleep changes
- Decreased appetite
- Tiredness
- Stomach upset
- Dry mouth
- Constipation
- Dizziness
- Changes in blood pressure

Unlike stimulants, these medications are not controlled substances. This may make refills easier to obtain.

For information on ADHD medications approved by the FDA, their images, available doses, and more, refer to the [ADHD Medication Guide](#) provided by Northwell Health's Cohen Children's Medical Center.