



We understand that a parent's decision to start their child or adolescent on ADHD medications is important. Many parents have questions about how these medications work, how they might affect their child, and what side effects the medication may have. The following answers some of the most common questions parents have about ADHD medications.

1. What studies have been done on the effectiveness of ADHD medications?

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Multimodal Treatment of ADHD (MTA) study evaluated the leading treatments for ADHD - including behavior therapy, medication, and the combination of both. This study included nearly 600 children (ages 7-9) who were randomly assigned to one of four treatment plans: medication alone, behavioral therapy alone, a combination of both, or routine community care (control group.) The MTA study showed that medication alone, and combination of medication and behavioral therapy, were both significantly superior to behavioral therapy alone. The combination of medication and behavior therapy proved most effective when patients had problems in other areas of functioning as well as ADHD (i.e. anxiety, parent-child relations, social skills and academic performance).

2. Are there other scientifically proven treatments for ADHD?

No other treatments have been shown to be effective for the treatment of ADHD. Behavioral therapy alone (without medication) did not prove effective. No supplements have been shown to significantly reduce ADHD symptoms.

3. How do these medications work to treat symptoms of ADHD?

Children with ADHD are constantly self-stimulating. They wiggle, they talk out of turn, daydream, and their mind doesn't seem to turn off. They seem to do everything except follow directions. When you give a stimulant to children with ADHD, they no longer have an urgent need to self-stimulate. Stimulants increase the chemicals in the brain associated with motivation, pleasure, attention, and movement. For many children with ADHD, stimulant medications boost concentration and focus while reducing hyperactive and impulsive behaviors.

4. What are the risks of not treating ADHD?

Without treatment, children and adolescents with ADHD are at risk of falling behind in school. They may struggle with making and keeping friendships, and family relationships are often strained. Children and adolescents with untreated ADHD frequently have low self-esteem and motivation. Though often higher on the IQ scale than their peers, they begin to doubt their capabilities. Children with ADHD often say they are "not able" to do school work and that is "too hard." These doubts, combined with difficulty controlling impulses, often lead to risk taking, accidents, fighting, discipline issues, and illegal drug use.

5. What side effects do stimulant medications cause?

Side effects occur sometimes. They are usually mild and short lived. The most common side effect of stimulant medications is decreased appetite - which can sometimes lead to weight loss.

Some children may experience sleep problems. Parents occasionally report a rebound effect (increased activity or a bad mood as the medication wears off). Our providers will monitor these symptoms closely at ADHD follow-up appointments through behavior rating scales, monitoring for side effects, and measurement of height, weight and blood pressure. Parent's may also call our Nurse Line at 303-699-6200 if they have concerns between follow-up appointments.

6. Should ADHD medications be taken with meals?

We recommend children take their ADHD medication right before or just after a meal to minimize the appetite suppression that may occur 1 - 2 hours after the medication is given. If it appears that your child's ADHD medication works better some days than others, consider his or her vitamin C intake.

Citric acid and ascorbic acid MAY impair the absorption of some ADHD medications from the gut. Patients may be advised not to ingest citrus fruit, all fruit juices (including Kool-Aid, Gatorade, etc.), most carbonated beverages, Pop Tarts, granola / breakfast bars, high vitamin cereals, oral suspension medication or vitamin C within one hour before or after their dose of stimulant medication.

7. Are these medications addictive?

ADHD medications are not addictive; this is a misconception. However, there is a potential for abuse if medications are misused. Extended release medications are less easily abused. Parents should keep medications in a secure place and monitor their use.

8. Will my child always need to take ADHD medications?

It was once thought that most children would outgrow their ADHD symptoms. We now know that this is not true. For some children, the symptoms diminish over time and they can "outgrow" or learn to manage their symptoms in their adult life. For some, ADHD is a lifelong disorder, requiring medication treatment into adulthood. Studies show about 50% of children diagnosed with ADHD will need medication as adults.

For more information: <http://www.parentsmedguide.org/>