Intermountain Health

Stimulant Medicine for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

What are stimulant medicines?

Prescription medicines called psychostimulants — or simply "stimulants" — are commonly used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Some common stimulant medicines for ADHD are Ritalin, Concerta, Adderall, or Vyvanse.

Stimulants are often the first medicine used to treat ADHD because many studies show that they work better than other medicines.

How do stimulants work?

Stimulants for ADHD don't make you smarter. They help you manage your symptoms. They do this by increasing the amount of chemicals in your brain that helps your brain cells "talk" to each other. This helps you build attention and organization skills so you can do better at school or work.

Are stimulants safe?

Stimulants can be dangerous if not used as prescribed. Your healthcare provider will check with you on a regular basis to make sure the medicine is working well. Your healthcare provider will also look for a history of substance abuse before prescribing stimulants, and will watch you closely during treatment. This means you might need extra check-ups and urine testing. You will need to follow all of your provider's instructions for a safe ADHD treatment plan.

Stimulants are "controlled substances." This means you can only get them by prescription. They can be dangerous if not used properly. It's against the law to share or sell these medicines for any reason.

My ADHD medicine is _____
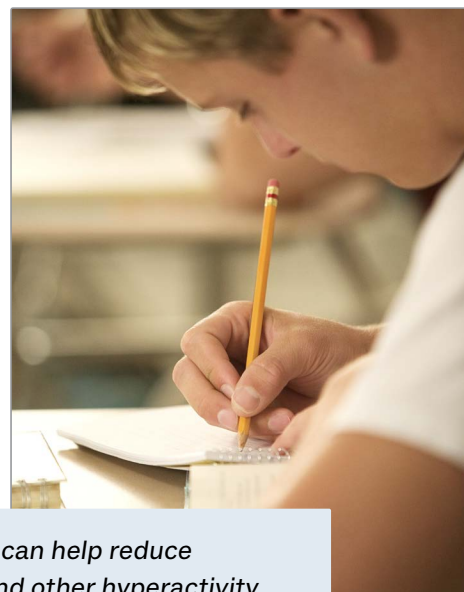
I need to take my medicine every day at _____

Do I need to take my medicine with food?
         (circle one)   YES   NO

I need to order my refill on _____
I can call or email my provider with questions at:

_____

_____

Stimulants can help reduce fidgeting and other hyperactivity. They also help improve focus so you can get your work or school assignments done on time.

What are common side effects of stimulants?

Stimulants can be pills, patches, or liquids. Some people may have side effects. Most side affects will go away in a few weeks, after your body gets used to the new medicine.

Some common side effects include:

- Nausea
- Headache
- Faster heartbeat
- Blood pressure changes
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Abdominal pain
- Loss of appetite or weight loss

What should I do before taking stimulants?

- Talk with your provider about the many ways to manage ADHD. Together, you will decide if stimulants are a good fit for you.

- Give your provider a list of all the medicines you take. Include all of your prescription and over-the-counter medicines (headache, allergy pills, etc.), vitamins, and herbal remedies. Some of these can increase your risk of side effects or cause a dangerous reaction if taken with stimulants.

- Talk with your provider and pharmacist about your stimulant prescription. Ask questions. Make sure you understand what you're taking, why you're taking it, how to take it, and what to expect after you take it.

How to safely take stimulants

- **Never** take more medicine than your provider tells you to take, even if you feel your ADHD is worse. Never take a higher dose and never take the medicine more often than prescribed.

- **Never** take illegal or recreational drugs, or any other prescription medicine that was not prescribed for you. You could have a bad reaction — one that could kill you.

- **Never** share your ADHD medicine with anyone, even if that person has ADHD. Sharing stimulant medicine is not only illegal — it's dangerous.

- Keep track of your medicine so you don't run out suddenly. Order your refill at least 10 days before you expect to run out.

- Tell your provider about any side effects you may have. Your provider may be able to change your dose or give you a different medicine.

- Keep the medicine in the bottle or container it came in. The label has instructions and information you need. Also, if you travel with your medicine, the airline will require you to have it in the original container.

- Lock up your medicine where it's safe. Don't keep it places where anyone can find it.

- Take any leftover medicines to a drug collection site, such as an Intermountain Healthcare Community Pharmacy. You can also find drop-off sites at **useonlyasdirected.org/drop-off-locator.**