

Pregnancy

Women who may become pregnant are advised to discuss medication with their doctor. Generally, we don't know enough to say if there is direct risk to the baby and therefore ADHD medications are not recommended in pregnancy. But if the medication is very important, in some cases women can decide to be off medication for the first three months of pregnancy and then return to medication for the remaining six months.

Medication licensing

A license is official permission for the drug company to advertise a drug for adult use.

We have plenty of evidence that the medications we use are useful and safe in adults. However, they are not licensed because when the drug company developed the medication, nobody knew adult ADHD existed. Only childhood ADHD was known.

Further information

For other information or questions on medication, get in touch with the Bristol ADHD Clinic.

Information in this leaflet was taken from:

Joint Formulary Committee (2012). *British National Formulary*. 64th ed. BMJ Press.

NICE (2008) ADHD Guidelines: Guideline 72. Available at www.nice.org.uk/CG72

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For information on Trust services visit

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PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01249 468261

Freephone: 0800 073 1778

Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, audio, Braille) or in another language, please call the PALS number.

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Medication for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD)

**Information leaflet for
service users and their
families and friends**

Medication to treat Adult ADHD

Medications have been found to improve ADHD symptoms in more than 80% of cases.

There are two basic types - stimulant and non-stimulant medicines. Stimulants are usually tried first.

Stimulant medication

There are two different types of stimulant medication:

1. Methylphenidate

These have the brand names of **Ritalin**[®], **Concerta XL**[®], **Medikinet**[®] or **Equasym**[®].

Methylphenidate is usually the first drug tried for adults with ADHD. They come in either tablet or capsule form. Most people find that methylphenidate improves attention and concentration soon after the first dose is taken. Further improvements are seen over the first week or so of treatment.

There are two types of methylphenidate.

- One has immediate effect but is short lived (lasting about four hours). It does not usually come with a brand name but sometimes it is called **Ritalin**[®].
- The longer acting medications work more slowly throughout the day with a gradual release over 8 to 12 hours.

Side effects with methylphenidate in adults are usually mild and tend to wear off after

two weeks or so.

However, everyone is different. If the side effects are too troublesome, you can stop the medicine.

Most common side effects include a mild increase in anxiety for a short while, abdominal pain, nausea, indigestion, dry mouth, reduced appetite, increased heart rate, tics, disturbed sleep, irritability, headaches, drowsiness, tearfulness, mildly increased blood pressure, loss of sex drive in some rare cases. Rare but severe side effects include psychotic symptoms (hearing voices or paranoid thoughts).

2. Dexamfetamine

The effects of Dexamfetamine last about 3 - 4 hours. It normally has the brand name **Dexedrine**[®]. There is a longer acting form called **Elvanse**[®] which lasts about 12 hours. Most people find that dexamfetamine improves attention and concentration after the first dose is taken. Further improvements are usually seen over the first week or so.

Side effects seen with Dexamfetamine are very similar to those seen in methylphenidate (see above).

Non-stimulant medication

Atomoxetine

Atomoxetine, also known as **Strattera**[®] is long-acting and, unlike the stimulant medications, does not have an immediate effect. Benefits may be noticed within the first

two weeks, while full effectiveness may take 4-6 weeks. It comes in capsule form. Side effects with atomoxetine can be off-putting because they come before the good effects, but do continue with it as long as you can tolerate the medicine as the side effects can wear off. Some people have few or no side effects, but others may suffer many. It is not possible to tell until you try.

The side effect to watch out for is if you get suicidal thoughts. This is very rare, but if it happens, stop the medication immediately and tell your doctor. Other more common side effects include reduced appetite, weight loss, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, constipation, indigestion, palpitations, increases in heart rate and blood pressure, insomnia or disturbed sleep, headaches, fatigue, agitation, irritability, sexual dysfunction, menstrual disturbances, dizziness or fits.

Bupropion

Also known as **Zyban**[®]. It is more commonly used as a stop-smoking aid, but is useful in ADHD and we use it in some cases where the other medications are not suitable. The side effects can include dry mouth, abdominal pain, nausea, indigestion, agitated, anxiety, depression and headache.

The Yellow Card Scheme

encourages patients to report side effects. Tell a member of the team if you wish to report any side effects or Telephone 0808 100 3352 or visit <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>