EP EMBRACE PSYCHIATRY
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ADHD Medications: A Patient Reference

Stimulant and non-stimulant options — what they are and how to use them safely

This handout lists the ADHD medications most commonly prescribed for adults. It is a reference — not a recommendation. Which medication (if any) is right for you depends on your health history, other conditions, and your prescriber's judgment.

> **Two main groups: Stimulants** work quickly (often within an hour) and are usually tried first. **Non-stimulants** work more gradually, are not controlled substances, and can be a good fit when stimulants are not appropriate or not preferred.

Stimulants — Methylphenidate Family

Brand (generic)	Form / about how long it lasts	Common side effects	Important cautions
Concerta (methylphenidate ER)	Once-daily tablet; lasts about 10–12 hours	Decreased appetite, trouble sleeping, headache, stomachache, dry mouth, faster heartbeat, mood dip as it wears off ("crash"), tics in some people	**Schedule II controlled substances.** Store locked up; never share. Cannot be refilled early — plan refills 3–5 business days ahead. Tell your prescriber about heart problems, high blood pressure, severe anxiety, tics, or glaucoma. Avoid alcohol.
Ritalin (methylphenidate IR)	Instant-release tablet; lasts about 4–6 hours; sometimes taken 2–3 times a day		
Ritalin LA (methylphenidate ER)	Capsule; lasts about 6–8 hours		
Daytrana (methylphenidate)	Skin patch worn about 9 hours		
Quillivant XR (methylphenidate ER)	Liquid; lasts about 12 hours		
Jornay PM (methylphenidate ER)	Taken in the evening; effect starts in the morning, lasts about 12 hours		
Cotempla XR-ODT (methylphenidate ER)	Tablet that dissolves on the tongue; lasts most of the day		

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Stimulants — Amphetamine Family

Brand (generic)	Form / about how long it lasts	Common side effects	Important cautions
Adderall XR (mixed amphetamine salts ER)	Capsule; lasts about 10–12 hours	Decreased appetite and weight loss, trouble sleeping, dry mouth, headache, faster heartbeat, jitteriness, irritability as it wears off	**Schedule II controlled substances** — same locked storage, no sharing, and refill rules as above. Tell your prescriber about heart problems, high blood pressure, severe anxiety or agitation, or history of substance misuse. Avoid alcohol.
Adderall (mixed amphetamine salts IR)	Instant-release tablet; lasts about 4–6 hours; sometimes taken 2–3 times a day		
Vyvanse (lisdexamfetamine)	Capsule or chewable; lasts about 12–14 hours. (A "prodrug" — it becomes active gradually, which smooths the effect.)		
Mydayis (mixed amphetamine salts ER)	Capsule; lasts up to about 16 hours		
Adzenys XR-ODT (amphetamine ER)	Tablet that dissolves on the tongue; lasts about 12 hours		
Dyanavel XR (amphetamine ER)	Liquid or tablet; lasts about 12 hours		
Evekeo (amphetamine)	Shorter-acting tablet; lasts about 4–6 hours		

Non-Stimulants

Brand (generic)	How it works / timing	Common side effects	Important cautions
Strattera (atomoxetine)	Taken daily; builds up over **2–6 weeks** for full effect. Lasts 24 hours.	Nausea, dry mouth, decreased appetite, tiredness, dizziness	Carries an FDA warning about increased suicidal thoughts in children and teens — report mood changes promptly at any age. Rare liver problems: report dark urine, yellowing skin/eyes, or upper-right belly pain.
Intuniv (guanfacine ER)	Taken daily; lasts 24 hours. Originally a blood-pressure medicine.	Sleepiness, tiredness, dizziness, dry mouth	**Do not stop suddenly** — stopping abruptly can cause rebound high blood pressure, headache, and agitation. Your prescriber will taper the dose. May lower blood pressure and heart rate.

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Kapvay (clonidine ER)	Taken once or twice daily. Originally a blood-pressure medicine; also helps impulsivity and sleep.	Sleepiness, dry mouth, dizziness, constipation	
Qelbree (viloxazine ER)	Taken daily; lasts 24 hours. Newer non-stimulant.	Sleepiness, nausea, decreased appetite, headache, trouble sleeping	Carries the same FDA suicidal-thoughts warning as atomoxetine. Tell your prescriber about all other medications — it affects how the body processes some drugs.

Safe Use of Controlled ADHD Medications

- **Locked storage:** keep stimulants in a locked box or cabinet, out of reach of children, teens, and visitors. These medications are a common target for theft and misuse.
- **Never share:** giving or selling your prescription to anyone else is illegal — even to a family member.
- **Refill planning:** by law these cannot be refilled early and most require a new prescription each fill. Request refills at least **3–5 business days** before you run out.
- **Drug testing and monitoring:** your prescriber may check your state's prescription monitoring database and request periodic visits, blood pressure checks, or drug screens. This is standard safe practice, not suspicion.
- **Lost or stolen medication:** report it promptly. Early refills are generally not permitted, so secure storage matters.

General Tips for Any ADHD Medication

- Take it exactly as prescribed — same time each day. Do not double up if you miss a dose; ask your prescriber or pharmacist what to do.
- Tell every prescriber and your pharmacist about **all** medications and supplements you take, including over-the-counter cold medicines (decongestants can raise heart rate and blood pressure).
- Report chest pain, fainting, severe mood changes, hallucinations, or thoughts of harming yourself **right away**.
- Medication works best alongside sleep, exercise, and organizational strategies — it improves the ability to focus, not the skill of organizing.

Please read: This handout is for education only and is not medical advice. Do not start, stop, or change any medication without talking to your prescriber. If you are in crisis, call or text **988** (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) or text **HOME** to **741741**.

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