

AT A GLANCE

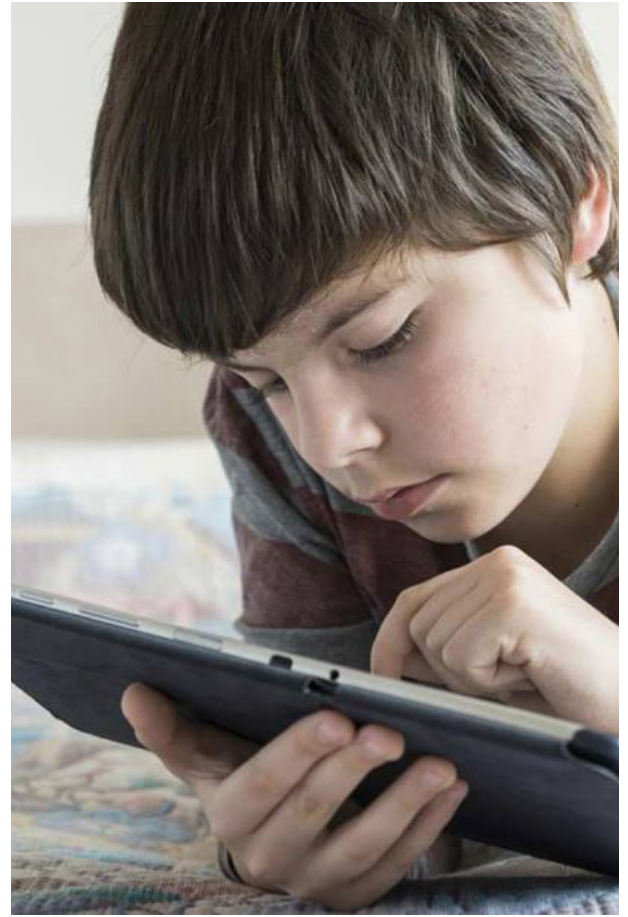
- ADHD medication can sometimes cause side effects.
- That's true for both stimulant and non-stimulant medications.
- Side effects can be mild or significant, and they usually go away after a child's body has a few days to get used to the medication.

ADHD medication is effective in reducing symptoms of ADHD (also known as ADD) in most kids. But it can sometimes cause side effects. That's true for both stimulant and non-stimulant medications.

Side effects like an upset stomach or headaches often disappear after a child's body has a few days to get used to the medication. But other common side effects, like decreased appetite, might not go away after a few days. There may also be a range in how kids experience side effects, from mild to fairly significant. They can occur while the medication is working, or after it's worn off.

Sometimes side effects go on for longer than a few days. Or kids may find them so uncomfortable that changes need to be made. In that case, the doctor might change the dosage or change from one type of medication to another.

Here are some common side effects of stimulant and non-stimulant ADHD medication. For more information, explore our comprehensive guide to ADHD medication.



SIDE EFFECTS OF ADHD STIMULANT MEDICATION

There are two types of stimulant medication. Methylphenidates include Ritalin, Focalin, Metadate and Concerta. Amphetamines include Dexedrine, Adderall and Vyvanse.

The potential side effects of these medications include:

- Sleep problems
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Increased blood pressure
- Dizziness
- Headaches and stomachaches
- Rebound (irritability when the medication wears off)
- Moodiness and irritability
- Nervousness

Less common side effects of stimulant medication can include:

- Tics (sudden, repetitive movements or sounds)
- Personality changes, such as appearing way too serious much of the time and lacking usual spontaneity or enthusiasm

SIDE EFFECTS OF NON-STIMULANT MEDICATION

There are a number of non-stimulant medications. These include Strattera, Tenex, Intuniv and Kapvay.

The potential side effects of these medications include:

- Nausea
- Stomachaches
- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Drowsiness
- Mood swings

HOW TO HELP WITH ADHD MEDICATION SIDE EFFECTS

It's important to tell your prescriber about any side effects. She may want to make changes to your child's medication, dose or timing. There are also things you can try at home to reduce side effects.

Sleep problems: Sometimes, stimulant medication makes it hard for kids to fall asleep. This problem usually gets better over time. It could take four to six weeks for this to resolve. ADHD itself can make it hard for kids to wind down and fall asleep at night, too. Because of that, you may also want to make changes to his bedtime routine.

Get tips from an expert on how to help kids with ADHD wind down at night.

Eating issues: Stimulant medications can cause eating problems when the medicine is active in a child's system. Extended-release versions of stimulant medications peak about four hours after they're taken. So if kids take the medication right after breakfast, they may not be hungry at lunchtime. That's why it's important to make sure kids eat breakfast first, and to encourage them to eat whenever they feel hungry.

Their appetite will likely return later in the day as the medication wears off. So in the evenings they may be extra hungry. Keeping healthy snacks around can help kids get enough nutrition throughout the day.

Nausea and headaches: These problems tend to go away within a few weeks of starting medication. You may be able to minimize them in the meantime by having your child take the medication with food.

It's important to let the doctor or prescriber know about any side effects you see. That includes changes in your child's mood or personality. Tell the doctor if your child seems much more anxious, irritable or unhappy for long periods. It's important to describe when this happens and how intense it is.

Read more about the connection between ADHD and anxiety and ADHD and depression. And get to know signs of anxiety and depression in kids.

Also, see a graphic that shows how ADHD medication works in the brain. Find out what grade-schoolers and tweens and teens need to know about ADHD medication. And learn about alternative treatments for ADHD that might make a difference for your child.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Side effects of stimulant medication can include sleep problems and decreased appetite.
- Side effects of non-stimulant medication can include nausea and stomachaches.
- If ADHD medication side effects go on for longer than a few days, ask the doctor about fine-tuning the medication or changing from one type of medication to another.