

Treating ADHD: Medicine



In many cases, medicine is part of a child's treatment plan. These medicines give a steady supply of the chemicals needed to send and receive messages within the brain.



Sending messages

Certain stimulants cause some sites in the brain to send stronger messages. When the messages are stronger, the child has better control over attention and activity. Stimulants work quickly and last a few hours. Extended release or long-acting stimulants may also be prescribed once your child's dose has been regulated by their healthcare provider.

Receiving messages

Some stimulants, antidepressants, and other kinds of ADHD medicines help the brain get messages better. Used to treat depression and inattention, these medicines are taken every day.

Be aware

It may take a few tries to find the best medicine for your child. The amount and time of use may also need to be adjusted. In some cases, your child may need to be checked for side effects. If medicine doesn't help, think about having your child reevaluated.

Parent's role

Here's what you can do to help your child:

- Develop a system that makes sure no medicine doses will be missed. Consider buying pill trays for home and school. Ask your pharmacist for ideas.
- Learn about the medicine your child takes, any side effects that might happen, and the results you can expect.
- Seek a second opinion if you have concerns about how your child's treatment is being managed.
- Make sure you, the school staff, and other caregivers follow all directions for giving your child medicine.
- Watch your child for positive changes both at home and in school. Keep track of any side effects. Consider keeping a medicine journal. Record dosages, side effects, and behaviors. Bring that information to any follow-up visits. It can help in making treatment choices and planning long-term management strategies. Tell your child's healthcare provider what you or others observe.
- Don't run low on medicine. Some prescriptions for ADHD need extra time to fill than most kinds of medicines.
- Ask your child how they feel about taking medicine. Keep an eye on social media to make sure cyberbullying is not occurring.

Child's role

Here are suggestions for what your child can do. Go over these with your child:

- How do you feel after you take your medicine? Tell your parents and healthcare provider how you feel.
- Your medicine comes in a pill. If you can't swallow the whole pill, ask your parents how to make it easier.
- Learn when to take your pill. Remind your parents or teachers when it is time.
- If someone teases you about taking medicine, talk to your parents or teacher. They can help you decide what to tell that person.
- Let your parents know if you have questions about your medicine. Don't be afraid to ask your healthcare providers questions when you go for visits.

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