

It is understandable to have concerns when your teen is coping with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), especially about treatment options. While there is no cure for ADHD, there are things you and your teen can do to manage it. In many cases, the best treatment is a combination of behavioral therapy and medication.

ADHD Medication

Many prescription drugs used to treat ADHD are stimulants. Common names of prescription stimulants are Ritalin, Adderall and Dexedrine. While all stimulants are different, they all have several things in common. They are a type of drug that increases activity in the brain. They can also increase energy levels and elevate alertness, mood and awareness. The negative side effects of taking stimulants include (but are not limited to) an increase in blood pressure, a decrease in respiratory function and addiction. For this reason, it is extremely important to monitor your teen's medications. Make sure your teen takes them appropriately and is not giving or selling them to others.

It's no secret that some teenagers experiment with drugs. Drug abuse is no longer restricted to street drugs like marijuana and cocaine. Many teens are using ADHD medications for recreational use.

Some people misuse ADHD medication because it gives them a "high." Others do it to concentrate on their schoolwork and to gain an edge on other students. Whatever the reason, stimulant abuse can lead to difficult and dangerous situations. Not only are there legal consequences to sharing prescriptions, but there are also serious side effects to taking a medication without a doctor's permission.

Adolescents who take ADHD medication have an elevated risk of becoming alcohol and street drug abusers. Studies show that teens with ADHD are more likely to transition from stimulant medications to other substances of abuse.

Tips for Parents

- Talk to your teen about his or her behaviors and medications. Ask about potential side effects. Make sure he or she takes prescriptions regularly and appropriately.
- Stay in close contact with your teen's teachers and other caretakers. Compare what they notice about specific behaviors with your own observations.
- If you have any concerns that your teen has begun to abuse or misuse medications, talk to him or her about it. Here is a [helpful tool](#) for starting a conversation with your teen about substance use.

As part of creating the best possible treatment plan for your teen, be sure to maintain regularly scheduled appointments with a provider. This will help monitor progress. It will also ensure any treatment plan changes or adjustments are made.

Here are some questions you may want to ask your teen's provider:

- What do I need to do if my teen experiences any side effects of his or her medication?
- Can other conditions affect or be affected by my teen's medication? Can other medications interact or affect the ADHD medication?
- How can I make sure my teen is taking his or her medicine correctly?
- What do I do if I think my teen is misusing or abusing his or her medication?

Work with your teen's provider to encourage open communication. Make sure your teen clearly understands your expectations about his or her ADHD medication. If you are having a difficult time understanding or managing your teen's actions, consider seeking additional help from a qualified mental health professional.