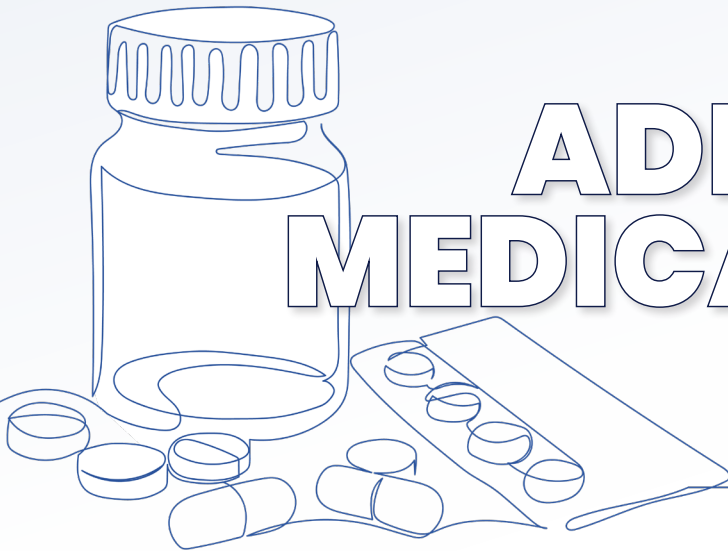




ADHD MEDICATION FAQS



*The best results usually come from combining both approaches, known as a **multimodal approach**.*

Ref: AADPA Guideline

1. WHAT'S THE EVIDENCE FOR ADHD MEDICATION?

Medication is the most effective treatment for the **core symptoms of ADHD**:

- Trouble paying attention, focusing, or organising
- hyperactivity
- impulsivity (acting without thinking).

By reducing these challenges, medication can improve daily functioning.

Other supports (like therapy or coaching) are more useful for building life skills.

Treatment should always be tailored to each person's needs, taking into account cost, access, and personal preference.



2. DO I HAVE TO TAKE MEDICATION?

No. It's your choice.

- Some people manage ADHD with therapy or other strategies alone.
- If stimulants aren't suitable for health reasons, non-stimulant options are available.

3. WHAT MEDICATION SHOULD I START WITH?

Doctors usually start with **stimulants**:

- Methylphenidate
- Dexamfetamine
- Lisdexamfetamine

All are effective but differ in how long they last. Some people respond better to one than another.

If stimulants aren't right, **non-stimulants** may be used:

- Guanfacine
- Atomoxetine

These work well but take longer to show effects.



Because response varies, finding the right medication and dose is a trial process.

Adjustments may take time, but once the right fit is found, improvements are usually noticeable.

4. WHAT MEDICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND?

STIMULANTS

- Increase dopamine and noradrenaline, improving focus, memory, and decision-making.
- Can be started or stopped suddenly without problems.

NON-STIMULANTS

- **Guanfacine:** helps with focus and impulse control. Do not stop suddenly.
- **Atomoxetine:** increases noradrenaline to improve communication between brain cells. Can be stopped suddenly, but may cause anxiety in some people.

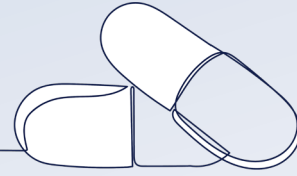
5. WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MEDICATION?

Improvements may include:

- Focus and concentration
- Feeling calmer
- Better memory and time management
- Thinking before acting
- Reduced overwhelm
- Easier task completion
- Better emotional control and relationships



REMEMBER



- ✓ Medication helps, but doesn't teach skills — learning strategies is still important.
- ✓ It won't "fix" ADHD but can make coping and learning easier.
- ✓ You may feel burnt out from doing more — pace yourself.
- ✓ Motivation doesn't come from medication alone.
- ✓ It may improve safety and healthier decision-making.

6. WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS?

COMMON:

- Trouble sleeping
- Reduced appetite
- Mild headaches, dry mouth, nausea, or stomach upset.

LESS COMMON — SEE YOUR DOCTOR IF:

- Fast heartbeat or dizziness
- Tics (involuntary movements or sounds)
- Mood changes or unusual thoughts
- Fatigue, muscle aches, or hair thinning (rare).

7. WHAT IF MEDICATION FEELS STRANGE?

SOME PEOPLE MAY:

- Not notice changes themselves (but others do)
- Feel more self-aware or uncomfortable
- Become quieter or more withdrawn
- Feel sad or anxious when medication wears off
- Miss aspects of their "old self"
- Experience grief after a late diagnosis
- If this happens, speak with your clinician.



STARTING MEDICATION (FIRST 6–8 WEEKS)

- ▶ Begin with a low dose, usually short-acting, then adjust as needed.
- ▶ Your doctor may later switch you to a longer-acting version.
- ▶ Tracking symptoms with checklists (SNAP, SKAMP, Vanderbilt, ASRS) is helpful.

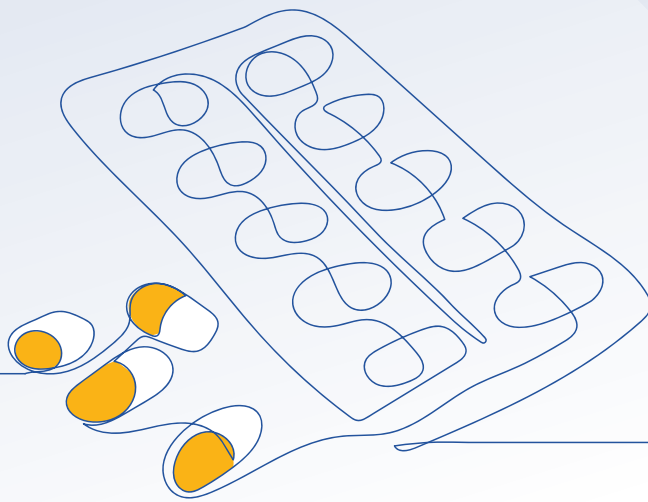
8. WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

You may feel:

- Clearer, calmer, more focused
- More productive with less stress
- Less distracted and better organised
- More flexible with changes
- Slightly tired or emotional when it wears off (usually temporary)

9. DO I NEED TO TAKE IT EVERY DAY?

- Stimulants: don't need to be taken daily; some people take breaks ("medication holidays").
- Atomoxetine: daily use recommended; can be stopped, but may trigger anxiety.
- Guanfacine: must be taken daily; do not stop suddenly.



10. LONG-TERM SAFETY?

Research shows ADHD medications are safe for most people long-term. Doctors monitor heart rate, blood pressure, height, and weight.

Benefits include:

- Better mental health
- Fewer accidents
- Improved school/work performance
- Stronger relationships
- Reduced risk of substance use, car crashes, or legal problems

LONG-TERM USE

Medication often becomes routine, like wearing glasses — you may not notice it working, but you'll notice if you miss it.

- ▶ **Not addictive:**
You won't crave ADHD medication if you skip a dose, though tasks may feel harder.
- ▶ **If it doesn't work:**
You may need a different dose or type — talk to your doctor.
- ▶ **If side effects occur:**
Adjusting the dose or switching medication can help.