

Atomoxetine (pron. at-o-mocks-e-teen) for parents and carers

What is atomoxetine used for?

Atomoxetine (also known as Strattera[®]) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). It is available as capsules.

What is the usual dose of atomoxetine?

The usual dose of atomoxetine is around 40-80mg a day for children under 18.

How should my child take atomoxetine?

Swallow the capsules with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your child's throat.

When should my child take atomoxetine?

Your child should take atomoxetine as directed on the medicine label. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you or your child to remember as atomoxetine is best taken with or after food. If the label says to only take it once a day this is usually best in the morning. If the label says twice a day then this is usually best in the morning and then late afternoon or early evening.

What are the alternatives to atomoxetine?

There are some other medicine (e.g. methylphenidate) and non-medicine treatments for ADHD. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

How long will atomoxetine take to work?

It normally takes about 4 weeks to start to work for ADHD. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

How long will my child need to keep taking atomoxetine for?

Your child will usually need to keep taking atomoxetine for several years. You should review this with your child's doctor every 12 months or so. Please look one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice on how long he or she might need to take it for.

Is atomoxetine addictive?

Atomoxetine is not a stimulant and is not addictive as such.

Can my child stop taking atomoxetine suddenly?

It is unwise to stop it suddenly, even if your child appears better. The symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after atomoxetine has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw atomoxetine by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks. Discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What should I do if my child forgets to take a dose of atomoxetine?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 4-6 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects. If you have problems remembering the doses (as very many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs, boxes and devices that can be used to help you remember.

Will atomoxetine affect my child's other medication?

Atomoxetine has a few interactions with other medicines.

- Other antidepressants such as imipramine, venlafaxine and mirtazapine should be used with care
- Decongestants that can be bought over the counter such as pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine (often found in cold remedies) should not be taken without consulting your pharmacist or doctor
- Atomoxetine may interact with salbutamol tablets (for asthma) but not usually with salbutamol inhalers
- Atomoxetine can increase blood pressure, so other medicines that increase blood pressure should be given with caution.
- Your child should have no problems with "The Pill" and atomoxetine.

Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

Can my child drink alcohol while he or she is taking atomoxetine?

Your child should have no problems with occasional alcoholic drinks.

What sort of side-effects might occur if my child is taking atomoxetine?

The table below will show your child some of the main side effects he or she might get from atomoxetine.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (less than about 1 in 10 people might get these)		
Anorexia	Weight loss, not feeling hungry.	If this is a problem, contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.
Nausea and vomiting	Feeling sick and being sick. Abdominal pain	If it is bad, contact your doctor. It may be possible to adjust the dose. Taking it after food may help. It should wear off after a few weeks.
Increased alertness	Early morning waking Irritability and mood swings	Discuss this with your doctor. He/she may be able to change the time of the dose or doses.
Insomnia	Not being able to fall asleep at night	Discuss this with your doctor. He/she may be able to change the time of the dose or doses.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint	Do not stand up too quickly. Try to get your child to lie down when he or she feels it coming on.
UNCOMMON (less than about 1 in 10 people might get these)		
Constipation	When you want to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). Your child can't pass a motion.	Make sure your child eats enough fibre, cereal or fruit. Make sure your child is drinking enough fluid, keeps active and gets exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
Skin rashes	Red rashes on the skin, dermatitis, pruritis (itching)	You should stop atomoxetine and call your doctor or hospital immediately if your child gets swelling or hives (small raised, itchy patches of skin). Atomoxetine can cause a serious allergic reaction in rare cases.
Fatigue	Your child feel tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If your child feels like this for more than a week after starting atomoxetine, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust the dose slightly.
RARE (less than about 1 in 1000 people might get these)		
Jaundice and hepatic damage	Pain just under the ribs, looking a bit yellow, feeling sick	Stop taking atomoxetine and contact your doctor straight away, don't delay.
Aggression	Being aggressive, depressed, hostile and perhaps suicidal thinking.	If this occurs, discuss with your doctor as soon as possible.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think your child might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

Will my child need a blood test if he or she is taking atomoxetine?

Your child should not need a blood test while taking atomoxetine.

Can my child drive or cycle while taking atomoxetine?

Your child may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking atomoxetine. If your child cycles or is old enough to drive, until this wears off or your child knows how atomoxetine affects him or her, he or she should avoid cycling, driving or operating machinery.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your child's medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.