

Dexamfetamine (pron. decks-am-feta-mean)

What is dexamfetamine used for?

Dexamfetamine (also known as dexamphetamine or by its trade name Dexedrine[®]) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and sometimes narcolepsy. ADHD can cause you to be easily distracted, not finishing things, getting into trouble, having driving accidents, not sticking with a job, and having relationship problems. It is available as tablets.

What is the usual dose of dexamfetamine?

The usual dose of dexamfetamine is around 20mg a day but can be up to 40mg a day in adults.

How should I take dexamfetamine?

Swallow the tablets 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 throat.

When should I take dexamfetamine?

Take your dexamfetamine as directed on the medicine label. Try to take it at regular times each day. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking it with or after food. If the instructions say to take it once a day this is usually best at breakfast. If more than once a day, the last dose should be no later than teatime to make sure it doesn't make it even harder to fall asleep.

What are the alternatives to dexamfetamine?

There are some other medicine (e.g. methylphenidate, atomoxetine), talking therapies and treatments for ADHD. See our website and "Handy chart" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will dexamfetamine take to work?

It usually starts to work within a few hours of a dose.

How long will I need to keep taking dexamfetamine for?

Probably for several years. Please look one of the "Handy charts" or on our website for more help and advice.

Is dexamfetamine addictive?

Dexamfetamine is a stimulant drug. In adults, it is possible that dexamfetamine can be addictive because it can be taken for its stimulant effect. But, there is no evidence that taking dexamfetamine will cause someone to take illicit drugs when they are older. In fact the opposite might be true because the person will not try to self-medicate with illicit drugs to manage their symptoms.

Can I stop taking dexamfetamine suddenly?

It is unwise to stop taking it suddenly, even if the symptoms have improved. At smaller doses, it can probably be stopped suddenly. At higher doses, it is possible that 'withdrawal' effects might be seen. These would include extreme tiredness, rebound overactivity, increased appetite and depression. If this were to happen, starting dexamfetamine again would get rid of these effects. When the time comes, you should stop dexamfetamine by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks. You should discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of dexamfetamine?

Start again as soon as you remember unless it is nearly time for your next dose then take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two or more doses at once as you may get more side-effects. You should tell your doctor about this next time you meet. If you have problems remembering your 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.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking dexamfetamine?

You should have no extra problems with dexamfetamine and alcohol in moderation.

Will dexamfetamine affect my other medication?

Dexamfetamine has only a few interactions with other medicines:

- Dexamfetamine can increase the effect of phenytoin and tricyclics (e.g. dosulepin, imipramine, lofepramine)

- Dexamfetamine should not be taken with a class of antidepressant called the MAOIs
 - You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and dexamfetamine.
- 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.

What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking dexamfetamine?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from dexamfetamine.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
VERY COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
COMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Anorexia	Loss of weight, not feeling hungry.	If this is a problem, ask to see a pharmacist or dietician for advice. It normally wears off after a few weeks.
Nausea and vomiting	Feeling sick and being sick. Abdominal pain	If it is bad, contact your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose. Taking it after food may help. It should wear off after a few weeks.
Nervousness	Feeling more anxious or nervous	This should wear off. If not, mention it to your doctor next time you meet.
Nasopharyngitis	Cough, sore nose and throat	This should wear off but see your doctor if it does not wear off.
Aggression	Being aggressive, irritable, depressed, hostile and perhaps suicidal thinking.	If this occurs, discuss with your doctor as soon as possible.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint	Do not stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Do not drive.
Tachycardia	Fast heart beat	This usually wears off but can mean the dose is a bit too high. Ask your doctor about this.
Insomnia	Not being able to fall asleep at night	Discuss this with your doctor. You may be able to change the time of your dose or doses. Make sure your last dose is before teatime, or even earlier.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Growth retardation	Slowing down of height gain and loss of weight	This only happens in younger people, who should be measured every few months to see if growth has slowed, although this is very unlikely.
Tachycardia	A pulse rate more than 120 beats per minute while you are resting.	If your pulse is over about 120 (i.e. not after exercise), you should mention this to your doctor. It may be you need a different dose or a beta-blocker to help slow it down.

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 you might have a side effect to your 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 I need a blood test if I am taking dexamfetamine?

You should not need any blood tests but you might need your heart checked before starting dexamfetamine.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking dexamfetamine?

You may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking dexamfetamine. Until this wears off, or you know how dexamfetamine affects you, do not drive or operate machinery. You should be careful as it may affect your reaction times.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your 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.