

Dexamfetamine (pron. decks-am-feta-mean) for parents and carers

What is dexamfetamine used for?

Dexamfetamine (also known as dexamphetamine or by its trade name Dexedrine[®]) is usually used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and sometimes narcolepsy. It is available as tablets.

What is the usual dose of dexamfetamine?

The usual dose of dexamfetamine is around 20mg a day (depending on your child's weight).

How should my child 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 the throat.

When should my child take dexamfetamine?

Dexamfetamine should be taken as directed on the medicine label. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier for you to remember as there is no problem about taking dexamfetamine with or after food. If the label says 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 other medicines (e.g. methylphenidate and atomoxetine), talking therapies and treatments for ADHD. See our "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 my child need to keep taking dexamfetamine for?

Probably for several years. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice on how long your child might need to take it for. Some do well taking it into their 20s and 30s.

Is dexamfetamine addictive?

Dexamfetamine is a stimulant medicine. There is no evidence that taking dexamfetamine will cause someone to take illicit drugs when they are older. In fact the opposite appears to be true because the child will not try to self-medicate with illicit drugs to manage their symptoms.

Can my child stop taking dexamfetamine suddenly?

It is unwise to stop taking it suddenly, even if the symptoms have improved. At smaller doses, it can be stopped suddenly. At higher doses, it is possible that 'withdrawal' effects might be seen. These would include extreme tiredness, becoming even more hyperactive, eating more and depression. If this were to happen by accident, then starting dexamfetamine again would get rid of these effects. When the time comes, you should withdraw 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 my child forgets to take a dose of dexamfetamine?

Take it as soon as you remember within about 2-3 hours of when it is due **BUT** do not take a dose any later than about late afternoon. If you do, it will mean that it may be much more difficult to get to sleep. Do not try to catch up by taking two or more doses at once as you may get more side-effects. If you or your child 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.

Will dexamfetamine affect my child's other medication?

Dexamfetamine has only a few interactions with other medicines:

- Dexamfetamine should not be taken with a type of antidepressant called the MAOIs
- Dexamfetamine can increase the effect of phenytoin and tricyclics (e.g. dosulepin/dothiepin, lofepramine)
- Your child 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.

Can my child drink alcohol while taking dexamfetamine?

There should be no extra problems with dexamfetamine and small amounts of alcohol.

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

The table below will show you some of the main side effects your child 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	Complaining their head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines your child 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 child's 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. Get your child to lie down if they feel it coming on.
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. He/she may be able to change the time of your child's dose or doses. Make sure the last dose is before teatime.
UNCOMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Growth retardation	Slowing down of height gain and loss of weight	Your child should be measured every few months to see how tall he or she is and how weight is changing. If it is slowing down, your child may need to switch medicines, although this is very unlikely.
Tachycardia	A pulse rate more than 120 beats per minute while you are resting.	If your child's pulse is over about 120 (i.e. not after exercise), mention this to your doctor. He or she may 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 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 taking dexamfetamine?

Your child should not need any blood tests but might need a heart check before starting dexamfetamine.

Can my child drive or cycle while taking dexamfetamine ?

Your child may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking dexamfetamine. If your child cycles or is old enough to drive, until this wears off or your child knows how dexamfetamine affects him or her, 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.