

## Dexamfetamine (say: decks-am-feta-mean) for parents and carers

### What is dexamfetamine used for?

- Dexamfetamine is usually used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and narcolepsy
- It is also known as dexamphetamine or by its trade name Amfexa<sup>®</sup>
- It is made as tablets and a 1mg/ml liquid.

- ☞ For ADHD, about 2 in 3 (60%) of people's symptoms improve with dexamphetamine
- ☞ If that doesn't work or it has too many side effects, then switching to another stimulant means about half of those people get better (total of about 75%, or 3 in 4 people)
- ☞ There are other options after that e.g. other medicines and therapies.

### 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
- It can be taken with or after food.

### When should my child take dexamfetamine?

- 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" for ADHD to help you compare the medicines available and how long to take them
- ☞ This will help you talk to your prescriber, nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

### 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 but it should be reviewed every 6 months by your specialist
- It works much better if taken regularly for at least 2 years

- Some people do well taking it into their 20s and 30s and beyond.

### Is dexamfetamine addictive and can my child stop taking it suddenly?

- Dexamfetamine is a stimulant medicine
- 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 getting depressed
- If this happens starting dexamfetamine again would get rid of these effects
- It normally works out much better stopping medication in a planned way at a time when stress levels are lower, rather than e.g. around exams or life events
- When the time comes, your child should come off it by a gradual drop in the dose over several weeks
- Discuss this with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist

*See our handy fact sheet on 'Coming off Medicines'*  
The evidence shows that dexamfetamine will not cause someone to take illicit drugs when they are older. In fact, the opposite appears to be true because children will not try to self-medicate with illicit drugs to help their symptoms.

### What should I do if my child forgets to take a dose of dexamfetamine at the right time?

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

If your child has problems remembering your doses (as many people do) ask to see our Handy Fact Sheet "Remembering to take your medicines".

### Will it affect my child's other medication?

Dexamfetamine has only a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:

- It can increase the effect of phenytoin and tricyclics (e.g. dosulepin, lofepramine)
- There is no problem with the 'Contraceptive Pill'.

You **must** also see the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) for the full possible list. 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.

## Can my child drink alcohol while taking it?

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

## Will my child need any blood or other tests?

- Your child should not need any blood tests but might need a heart check before starting it and checks on weight, height and blood pressure
- If your child has any blood tests, make sure they know he/she takes this as dexamfetamine can lead to odd results in some tests.

## What about pregnancy?

- Discuss this with the health professional - there are leaflets that can help give you the information to make a choice
- If your child thinks she might be pregnant see her health professional as soon as possible.

## Can my child drive or cycle while taking it?

- Your child may feel a bit dizzy at first
- 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 machines.

If you have ADHD, dexamfetamine can help you concentrate and so you may actually be *less* likely to have an accident, **but only if you take it regularly.**

(for more details go to [www.gov.uk/adhd-and-driving](http://www.gov.uk/adhd-and-driving))

In the UK you are legal to drive as long as you take methylphenidate as prescribed by a prescriber and you are sure that it doesn't harm your driving.

## What sort of side-effects might my child get if taking dexamfetamine?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the maker's Patient Information Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think your child might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your prescriber, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>VERY COMMON</b> ( <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.
Insomnia	Not being able to fall asleep at night	Discuss this with your doctor. They may be able to change the time of your child's dose or doses. Make sure the last dose is before teatime. Some people find melatonin helps.
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.
<b>COMMON</b> ( <i>fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
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.
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.
<b>Tell your prescriber if your child gets this side effect</b>		
Change in mood	Being aggressive, depressed, hostile and perhaps suicidal thinking.	It is more likely to occur after starting, a dose increase, or overdose. See your prescriber straight away if you have thoughts of harming yourself.

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

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