

Dexamfetamine (say: decks-am-feta-mean) for adults with ADHD

What is dexamphetamine used for?

- Dexamphetamine is usually used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and narcolepsy
- It is available as tablets.

- ☞ 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 helps 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 dexamphetamine?

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

How should I take dexamphetamine?

- 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 dexamphetamine?

- 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 your early evening meal to make sure it doesn't make it even harder to fall asleep
- It can be taken with or after food.

What are the alternatives to dexamphetamine?

- There are other medicines (e.g. methylphenidate, atomoxetine, guanfacine), 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 discuss your care with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

How long will dexamphetamine take to work?

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

How long will I need to keep taking it for?

- It works much better if taken regularly for at least 2 years
- It should be reviewed at least once a year by your specialist.

Is dexamphetamine addictive and can I stop taking it suddenly?

- Dexamphetamine is a stimulant drug and it is possible that it can be addictive because it can be taken for its stimulant effect
- 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, rebound overactivity, increased appetite and depression
- If this happens starting dexamphetamine again would get rid of these effects
- When the time comes, you should come off it by a gradual drop in the dose over several weeks
- It normally works out much better if stopping medication in a planned way at a time when stress levels are lower, rather than e.g. around exams or life events
- You should discuss this with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

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

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of dexamphetamine at the right time?

- 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.

If you have problems remembering your doses (many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or case manager about this. Webster, other packs and Apps can help you.

Will it affect my other medication?

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

- Dexamphetamine can increase the effect of phenytoin and tricyclics (e.g. amitriptyline)
- There is no problem with the 'Contraceptive Pill'.

You **must** see the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet for the full list of interactions. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you must follow your doctor's instructions carefully.



Can I drink alcohol while I am taking dexamphetamine?

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

Will I need any blood or other tests if I am taking dexamphetamine?

- You should not need any blood tests but you might need your heart checked before starting dexamphetamine
- If you have any blood tests, make sure they know you take this medicine as dexamphetamine can lead to odd results in some tests.

What about getting pregnant?

- Discuss this with your health professional - there are leaflets that can help give you the information you need to make a choice

- Usually, people gradually reduce their dose before trying to get pregnant
- If you find yourself pregnant unexpectedly see your health professional as soon as possible.

Can I drive, cycle or operate a boat while I am taking dexamphetamine?

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

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

What sort of side-effects might I get if I am taking dexamphetamine?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the Consumer Information Leaflet (CMI) for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Others may get some that are not listed. 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 you might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your doctor, pharmacist or case manager.

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.
Loss of appetite	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.
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 your early evening meal, or even earlier. Some people find melatonin helps.
COMMON (<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 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. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Do not drive.
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 that you need a different dose or a beta-blocker to help slow it down.
Tell your doctor if you get this side effect		
Aggression	Being aggressive, irritable, depressed, hostile and perhaps suicidal thinking.	If this occurs, discuss with your doctor as soon as possible.

Lifeline provides 24hr telephone crisis support on 13 11 14 or visit www.lifeline.org.au for information & downloads

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand more about dexamphetamine. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet. You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else.

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