



# Unlicensed treatment for adults with ADHD

## Understanding ADHD in adults

ADHD is a condition that can persist into adulthood, contrary to the outdated belief that it only affects children. Despite this, many medications for ADHD are still only licensed for use in children, and the patient information leaflets have not been updated to reflect current knowledge.

### NICE guidelines and unlicensed use

In the UK, the [NICE guidelines](#), recommend several pharmacological treatments for adults with ADHD. These include:

- 1** **Methylphenidate**  
This is the first-line treatment and includes various formulations such as Xaggitin XL, Concerta XL, Medikinet XL, Equasym XL, and short-release methylphenidate.
- 2** **Lisdexamfetamine**  
Recommended if methylphenidate is not effective or tolerated.
- 3** **Dexamfetamine**  
Considered if lisdexamfetamine is not tolerated due to prolonged effect.
- 4** **Atomoxetine**  
An alternative for those who are not clinically suitable for or cannot tolerate stimulants or if there is a risk of misuse.
- 5** **Guanfacine**  
Third line option, particularly if other treatments are not suitable.



## Unlicensed use of medications

While these medications are primarily licensed for children, they are commonly prescribed off-label for adults based on clinical guidelines and evidence of their effectiveness. This practice is known as unlicensed or off-label use. It is important to understand that:

1

### Unlicensed use

Unlicensed use means the medication is not officially approved for a specific age group or condition, but it is prescribed based on clinical judgement and guidelines.

2

### Safety and efficacy

The safety and efficacy of these medications for adults with ADHD have been supported by clinical studies and real-world use.

## Further information

For more information, please visit the [NICE](#) website or the [Choice and Medication](#) website and search for [the factsheet on unlicensed medication](#).