

Helpful tips to optimise your ADHD treatment and understand the side effects

Do...

- If you are on a long-release stimulant medication, taking it late in the day may impact your sleep at night. We recommend taking it early in the morning after eating your breakfast, preferably before 9am. If you miss or have forgotten to take your stimulant medication, please do not take it in the afternoon as it may impact your sleep. Please wait until the next morning to take the stimulant medication.
- If you are on a short-release stimulant medication, please establish a daily routine for taking your tablets, leaving a 4-hour gap between each dose. At the start of your titration, please avoid taking the last dose too late as it may impact your sleep at night. We recommend that you take the last dose before 4pm until you have established that taking it later than 4pm will not affect your sleep at night.
- Take your medication with, or immediately after, food and eat regularly throughout the day. This will help reduce the risk of nausea, which is a common side effect. Eating regularly will help keep your energy levels stable.
- Stay hydrated. A common side effect is that your mouth feels dry, or you feel thirsty. Drinking sufficient water helps to reduce this side effect and prevent the risk of dehydration.
- Please stop taking the stimulant medication if you are unable to tolerate the side effects (for example, if it causes you to feel agitated, nervous, anxious or causes your heart rate to increase uncomfortably).
- If you are prescribed other medications or are taking over-the-counter remedies, please check with your consultant, GP or your local pharmacist whether there is any risk of interaction with your ADHD medication.
- If you are working, driving or using equipment that may put you at risk, please consider starting your medication and taking the first dose of your titration on a day when you are not doing any of these activities, for example at the weekend or on a day off work. This is because the medication may cause dizziness. Once you have established that you are not getting any side effects that may impair your functioning, you can continue to take the dose daily.

What to avoid...

- Drinking caffeinated products such as cola drinks, energy drinks, coffee, green tea, black tea etc. can increase your heart rate and blood pressure, as they can interact

with your stimulant medication. Caffeinated products can also exacerbate the side effects of the stimulant medication (for example, feeling 'jittery', anxious, increased heart rate etc.). Please do avoid all caffeinated products and consider switching to decaffeinated options.

- The use of alcohol can interact with ADHD stimulant medications and mask your symptoms of ADHD. There is a risk of raised blood pressure when alcohol is mixed with stimulant medications, and this means increased cardiac risk. If you do wish to use alcohol, it should be consumed after the effect of your stimulant medication has worn off, and you should adhere to the recommended units of alcohol per week: no more than 14 units a week - equivalent to 6 pints of beer or 7 glasses of wine. Drinking should also be moderate, over three or more days, and some days should be alcohol-free.
- For those who may be sensitive to stimulant medication, the use of nicotine products (smoking, vaping, chewing nicotine products) may cause their blood pressure and heart rate to increase when they use nicotine products, when they have stimulant medications in their system. If this is the case, it may help for you to reduce or stop using nicotine products, as it would be difficult for titration and prescribing to continue if your blood pressure and heart rate increase to above the acceptable threshold.
- Similarly, the use of substances such as cannabis, cocaine and other illicit drugs could increase heart rate when mixed with stimulant medication. Therefore, substances should be avoided.
- Avoid taking over-the-counter remedies or painkillers that contain caffeine and decongestants. For example: some painkillers contain caffeine. Please consult a pharmacist if you are unsure when buying over-the-counter remedies or painkillers.

Other things to look out for...

Please alert us if you have started to experience health problems that may be exacerbated by the stimulant medication. For example, cardiac problems can be exacerbated by stimulant medications.

- Please alert us if your heart rate increases uncomfortably or if you are concerned about your blood pressure.
- If your blood pressure is consistently above 140/90 mmHg and/or or heart rate is consistently above 100bpm and/or you have cardiac symptoms such as chest pains, palpitations, dizziness, difficulty breathing etc, please stop taking the stimulant medication and seek medical help if required.
- (If this applies to you) Stimulant medication is not recommended in pregnancy. In this case, please stop taking the medication and speak to your Psychiatry UK doctor and prescriber immediately.

- If you suspect you have any symptoms of Covid19 or if you feel unwell with other illnesses (e.g. cold, chest infection, flu etc.) please stop taking the medication and let your prescriber know, as the medication may put more pressure on your system and impede your recovery. Some illnesses may increase your blood pressure and your heart rate; taking the ADHD medications can further increase these readings, and they may also exacerbate the symptoms of your illness.