

ADHD medication

Who can safely start treatment?

A guide for patients

If you are considering booking a private ADHD assessment, you may also be thinking about whether ADHD medication could be an option for you.

If you are diagnosed with ADHD, you will be offered the opportunity to start ADHD medication with our titration team here at Psychiatry UK. Most people can safely take ADHD medication and many find it helpful.

However, there are some situations where we cannot safely use ADHD medication. We will not start ADHD medication if it could cause you serious harm.

This leaflet explains some important situations where we will not be able to start ADHD medication, or where we may only be able to offer certain types of medication.

Please remember that the vast majority of people can start ADHD medication safely. If something in this leaflet applies to you, it does not always mean you can never have treatment. It may mean we need more information, specialist advice, or to consider a different type of medication.

When we will not be able to start ADHD medication

There are some situations where ADHD medication is not safe or appropriate.

If any of the situations below apply to you, we will not be able to start ADHD medication. In some cases, this may change in the future if your health situation changes, a condition becomes well controlled, or we receive specialist advice.

Physical health conditions

We will not be able to start ADHD medication if you have any of the following physical health conditions:

- 1 End-stage renal failure.
- 2 Uncontrolled hyperthyroidism.
This is different from hypothyroidism, which is a more common thyroid condition.
- 3 A pulmonary embolism in the last three months.
- 4 Long QT syndrome, or a prolonged QT interval on an ECG.

If any of these apply to you, please consider this carefully before booking an ADHD assessment with us. Your consultant can discuss what this means for your treatment options, but we will not be able to start ADHD medication while these risks are present.



Mental health and emotional wellbeing

Your mental health and emotional wellbeing are an important part of deciding whether ADHD medication can be started safely.

We will not be able to start ADHD medication if you are currently experiencing:

- 1 High suicidal risk.
- 2 Serious ongoing self-harm.
- 3 An eating disorder that is not well controlled.
- 4 Uncontrolled psychosis.
- 5 Uncontrolled mania.

This does not mean you are being refused care. It means that ADHD medication would not be safe or appropriate to start while these risks are present. You may need support for your mental health first, before ADHD medication can be considered.



Other situations where we will not be able to start treatment

There are some other situations where we will not be able to start ADHD medication. These include:

- 1 Ongoing use of illicit drugs.
Read our guide [Alcohol, Recreational Drugs and ADHD Medication](#) for more information.
- 2 Alcohol dependence or drinking heavily.
Read our guide [Alcohol, Recreational Drugs and ADHD Medication](#) for more information.
- 3 Pregnancy.
If you are currently pregnant, we will not start ADHD medication during your pregnancy. Read our guide [ADHD, Medication and Pregnancy](#).
- 4 Taking two or more medicines that increase the risk of serotonin syndrome.
Serotonin syndrome is a rare but potentially serious reaction that can happen when certain medicines are taken together. If this applies to you, your consultant will discuss this with you. You may be asked to reduce or stop some medicines before ADHD medication can be started. If you cannot reduce these medicines, we can offer you an alternative ADHD medication called guanfacine.



When we will not be able to offer stimulant ADHD medication

There are some situations where we can offer ADHD medication, but **stimulant medication will not be suitable**.

Stimulant medications include medicines such as methylphenidate and lisdexamfetamine. In some health situations, these medicines could increase risk, particularly if they may affect your heart, blood pressure, circulation or other medical conditions.

If any of the conditions below apply to you, we will only be able to offer a non-stimulant medication for your ADHD.

Conditions where we will only be able to offer atomoxetine

Atomoxetine is a non-stimulant ADHD medication.

We will only be able to offer atomoxetine, rather than stimulant medication, if you have:

- 1 Supraventricular tachycardia.
- 2 Mild ischaemic heart disease.
- 3 Moderate heart valve regurgitation or stenosis.
- 4 A transient ischaemic attack, sometimes called a TIA or 'mini-stroke'.
- 5 Hyperthyroidism that still needs regular medication to control it
This is different from hypothyroidism, which is a more common thyroid condition.

- 6 Severe Raynaud's syndrome.

Your consultant will discuss this with you if it applies to your situation.

Conditions where we will only be able to offer guanfacine

There are some situations where we will only be able to offer a medicine called guanfacine for your ADHD.

This is because stimulant medication and atomoxetine may not be safe if you have certain conditions that affect your heart, blood pressure, circulation, brain, eyes or weight.

We will only be able to offer guanfacine if you have:

- 1 Serious heart rhythm problems, such as atrial fibrillation, ventricular tachycardia or Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome.
If you have had an ablation procedure to treat this, ADHD medication may still be possible, but your consultant will need to request more information from your specialist first.
- 2 Heart failure.
- 3 Myocardial infarction, also known as a heart attack.
- 4 Moderate or severe ischaemic heart disease.
- 5 Angina.
- 6 Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

7

Severe heart valve disease.

If you have had a heart valve replacement, we will need more information from your specialist before deciding whether medication can be started.

8

Poorly controlled benign intracranial hypertension.

9

Ischaemic stroke.

If you have had another type of stroke, such as a bleed affecting the brain, ADHD medication may still be possible, but we will need more information from your specialist first.

10

Poorly controlled grand mal epilepsy.

You must not have had a seizure within the last six months.

11

Brain aneurysm or cerebral arteriovenous malformation.

12

Untreated closed-angle glaucoma.

13

Uncontrolled open-angle glaucoma.

14

BMI under 17

If your BMI is between 17 and 18.5, we will need evidence that this is normal for you and that you have not had an eating disorder.

15

Uncontrolled high blood pressure.

16

Uncontrolled fast heart rate.

What to do next

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet.

Please review the conditions and circumstances listed before booking your ADHD assessment. If any of them may apply to you, it's important to understand that we may not be able to start ADHD medication, or your medication options may be limited.

You can still choose to book an assessment. Your consultant will discuss your individual circumstances with you and, if there is any doubt about whether medication can be started safely, they will take advice from the multidisciplinary team here at Psychiatry UK.



How to get in touch

If you have any queries about the information in this leaflet, please contact our patient support team via **Live Chat** or by telephone: **0330 124 1980 (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm)**.