

Understanding your medication

Side effects and practical tips

Starting ADHD medication is an important step in your treatment journey and we look forward to supporting you.

Most people tolerate ADHD medication well, and many experience no side effects at all.

When side effects do occur they are usually mild, tend to appear in the first few weeks or after a dose change, and often settle as your body adjusts. This guide describes the side effects people most often notice and what you can do about them.

Key things to remember

- Not everyone experiences side effects.
- Most side effects are temporary and can improve with time.
- Do not stop taking your medication without speaking to your clinician first, unless you have been advised to do so.
- Complete your Monitoring & Physical Observation forms as accurately as possible, even if a symptom seems minor.
- Tell us about any symptoms that concern you in your next monitoring form.



Side effects that can affect more than 1 in 10 people

Side effect	What you might experience	Helpful tips
Reduced appetite	Eating less, forgetting meals, weight loss	Eat breakfast before medication, plan meals and snacks, monitor your weight, eat a meal in the evening when the medication has worn off
Difficulty sleeping	Taking longer to fall asleep, waking during the night	Take medication as early in the day as you can unless directed otherwise. Avoid caffeine later in the day, keep a regular bedtime routine
Headaches	Mild aches or pressure around the head	Drink plenty of water, eat regular meals, monitor when headaches occur
Dry mouth	Thirst, dry lips, sticky mouth	Sip water regularly, chew sugar-free gum, maintain good oral hygiene

Exact frequencies vary between medicines – the leaflet inside your medicine box gives the figures for yours.

Side effects that can affect fewer than 1 in 10 people

Side effect	What you might experience	Helpful tips
Feeling sick (nausea)	Queasy stomach, mild discomfort	Take medication with food and stay hydrated
Feeling anxious or restless	Feeling tense, on edge or unable to relax	Maintain good sleep habits and report any worsening symptoms
Irritability or mood changes	Frustration, emotional changes, increased irritability	Record symptoms in your monitoring form and let us know if they continue
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed or unsteady	Stand up slowly and stay hydrated
Faster heartbeat or being aware of your heartbeat	Feeling light-headed or unsteady	Usually mild and settles with rest. If you feel unwell with it, or it is not improving, call NHS 111 for help.

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When should I tell my clinical team?

If you experience any of these side effects, please let your prescriber know about it on your next monitoring form. If you are experiencing other new symptoms that you think might be a side effect, please mention this to them also.

Important safety information

Please ensure you have read the guide your prescriber has sent you explaining what to do if you think you are experiencing a medical emergency. If you think you are experiencing a medical emergency, please call 999 for immediate help. If in doubt seek urgent advice by calling 111.

Why your monitoring forms matter

Your monitoring forms help your clinical team understand:

- How well your medication is working
- Whether side effects are occurring
- If any changes to treatment may be needed
- How we can best support you

Even small changes can be important, so please include anything you feel may be relevant.

We're here to support you

ADHD treatment is a collaborative process. By completing your monitoring forms and sharing any concerns, you help us ensure your treatment remains safe, effective and tailored to your needs.

We wish you all the best with your treatment.