



# Patient and Caregiver Information on Psychostimulants

The name of your medication is \_\_\_\_\_.

## What is this drug used for?

Psychostimulants (also sometimes called "stimulants") are primarily used in the treatment of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children, adolescents, and adults. These drugs are also approved for use in other conditions such as Parkinson's disease and narcolepsy (a sleeping disorder).

Though they are currently not approved for this indication, psychostimulants have been found useful as add-on therapy in the treatment of depression. Ask your doctor if you are not sure why you are taking this drug.

**Note:** These medications may not have formal approval by regulatory agencies such as Health Canada or the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children or adolescents for some or all of the above uses.

## How quickly will the drug start working?

Some response to psychostimulants is usually noted within the first week of treatment of ADHD and tends to increase over the next 3 weeks.

## How does your doctor decide on the dosage?

Psychostimulants come in various formulations including short-acting and slow-release (i.e., Spansules or extended-release) forms as well as a skin patch (Daytrana – available in the US only). The dose is sometimes based on body weight and is given once daily (for slow-release forms) or several times a day (short-acting forms). Take the drug exactly as prescribed; **do not increase or decrease the dose without speaking to your doctor.**

## How long should you take this medication?

Psychostimulants are usually prescribed for a period of several years. Some clinicians may prescribe "drug holidays" to individuals on this medication (i.e., the drug is temporarily not taken at certain times such as vacations, etc.), in situations when side effects may be of concern.

## What side effects may happen?

Side effects may happen with any drug. They are not usually serious and do not happen to everyone. Side effects may sometimes occur before beneficial effects of the medication are noticed. If you think you may be having a side effect, speak to your doctor or pharmacist as they can help you decrease it or cope with it.

Common side effects that should be reported to your doctor at the NEXT VISIT include:

- Energizing/agitated feeling, excitability – some individuals may feel nervous or have difficulty sleeping for a few days after starting this medication. If you are taking the medication in

the late afternoon or evening, your doctor may decide to prescribe it earlier in the day.

- Increased heart rate – speak to your doctor.
- Headache – this tends to be temporary and can be managed by taking pain medicine (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) when required. If the headache persists or is "troubling," contact your doctor. Blood pressure should be checked by your doctor before and after starting, and following dose increases.
- Nausea or heartburn – if this happens, take the medication with food or milk.
- Dry mouth – sour candy, mints, and sugarless gum help increase saliva in your mouth. Do not drink sugar-containing drinks frequently as they may increase the risk for dental cavities and increase your weight. Drink water and brush your teeth regularly.
- Loss of appetite, weight loss, decreased growth – taking the medication after meals, eating smaller meals more frequently, switching to use of whole milk, or drinking liquid nutritional supplements may help. Some clinicians may prescribe "drug holidays" to individuals on this medication (i.e., the drug is temporarily not taken at certain times, such as vacations, etc.) to help with appetite and growth.
- Blurred vision – this usually happens when you first start the drug and tends to be temporary. Reading under a bright light or at a distance may help. If the problem lasts for more than a few weeks, let your doctor know.
- Respiratory symptoms including sore throat, coughing or sinus pain.
- Skin irritation and rashes at the application site with topical patch (Daytrana).

Rare side effects you should report to your doctor **RIGHT AWAY** include:

- Fast or irregular heart beat
- Dizziness, feeling faint or lightheaded
- Muscle twitches, tics or movement problems
- Persistent throbbing headache
- Sore mouth, gums or throat
- Skin rash or itching, swelling of the face with oral form and topical patch
- Any unusual bruising or bleeding, appearance of splotchy purplish darkening of the skin
- Tiredness, weakness, fever or feeling like you have the flu, associated with nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite
- Yellow tinge in the eyes or to the skin; dark-colored urine (pee)
- Severe agitation or restlessness
- A persistent or painful erection of the penis that continues for longer than 4 hours
- A switch in mood to an unusual state of happiness or irritability; fluctuations in mood or hallucinations (e.g., hearing voices, or seeing persons or things that no-one else sees) or thoughts of suicide.

Let your doctor know **right away** if you miss your period or think you may be **pregnant**, plan to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

## What should you do if you forget to take a dose of your medication?

If you take the psychostimulant 2–3 times a day and forget to take a dose by more than 4 hours, skip the missed dose and continue with your regular schedule. **DO NOT DOUBLE THE DOSE.** If you take an extended-release form of a psychostimulant once daily in the morning and forget to take a dose by more than 4 hours, skip the dose and continue with your regular schedule the next day.

The skin patch (Daytrana) is placed on the body in the morning and removed 9 hours later.

## Is this drug safe to take with other medication?

Because psychostimulants can change the effect of other medication or may be affected by other medication, always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking other drugs, including those you can buy without a prescription such as cold remedies and herbal preparations. Always inform any doctor or dentist that you see that you are taking a psychostimulant drug.

## Precautions/considerations

1. This medication should not be used in patients who have high blood pressure, heart disease or abnormalities, hardening of the arteries or an overactive thyroid. If there is a history of heart problems or sudden or unexplained deaths in your family, tell your doctor before taking this medication.
2. Do not change your dose or stop taking this medication without talking to your doctor.
3. Use caution while driving or performing tasks requiring alertness as these drugs can mask symptoms of fatigue and impair concentration.
4. Report to your doctor any changes in sleeping or eating habits or changes in mood or behavior.
5. This drug may interact with medication prescribed by your dentist, so let him/her know the name of the drug you are taking.
6. If using the Daytrana patch, it takes about 8 hours after applying the patch before blood concentrations reach a maximum level. Furthermore, substantial amounts of drug remain in the body for about 6 hours after patch removal.
7. Your doctor should monitor height and weight periodically for children taking psychostimulants to ensure they are growing properly.

## What else do I need to know about psychostimulants?

1. Do not chew or crush the tablets or capsules unless specifically told to do so by your doctor.
2. If you have difficulty swallowing medication, your doctor may prescribe a liquid form, an orally disintegrating tablet, a chewable tablet, a capsule that can be opened and the beads from it sprinkled on apple sauce and swallowed without chewing, or a capsule that can be opened and the contents mixed in a glass of plain water, orange juice or yogurt and swallowed.
3. If you are prescribed the skin patch (Daytrana), it should be applied to clean, dry skin on the hip immediately upon removal from the protective pouch; do not apply to skin areas that are inflamed or broken. The patch should not be exposed to external heat sources (e.g., heating pads, hot tubs); used patches need to be discarded carefully, according to package instructions. There may occasionally be some difficulties removing the patch.
4. If you take Concerta, you may notice the tablet shell in your stool. This is normal; the tablet shell does not dissolve but the contents of the tablet are fully absorbed.
5. Store your medication in a clean, dry area at room temperature. Keep all medication out of the reach of children.

**If you have any questions regarding this medication, please ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.**