

Dexmethylphenidate

Focalin / Focalin XR • IR tablets and XR capsules

A stimulant that can help attention and follow-through. The aim is better daily function, not feeling wired.

From Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC's education collection ·

Draft for review · Clinical content has not been revalidated for this website.

USE ONLY YOUR PRESCRIBED DOSE

IR AND XR HAVE DIFFERENT SCHEDULES

ADHD treatment • Schedule II controlled medicine • Do not switch formulations or change doses yourself.

What it is used for

It treats ADHD as part of a plan that may include skills, therapy and school or workplace supports.

Tell your team which tasks you want to make easier. Feeling more energized alone does not show that the medicine is the right fit.

How it works

It increases the availability of dopamine and norepinephrine, messengers involved in attention and impulse control.

Taking extra or using it differently can cause addiction, overdose or death. Keep it for your own prescribed use.

What to expect over time

THE FIRST DAY

Benefit may begin within the first hour; timing varies.

THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

Your team checks results and adjusts the dose no faster than weekly.

THE RIGHT FIT

Tasks feel more manageable without unacceptable sleep, appetite or mood changes.

Taking your medication

Follow your bottle's schedule. IR is usually taken twice daily, at least 4 hours apart; XR is taken once in the morning. Avoid late catch-up doses.

Take with or without food. Swallow XR whole, or sprinkle all beads on applesauce and swallow immediately without chewing. Do not crush, divide or save the mixture.

Keep meals regular even if you feel less hungry. Do not take extra for studying, work or tiredness, and never share it.

When to get help

Call 911: chest pain, fainting, severe breathing trouble, stroke symptoms, seizure or severe allergy. For possible overdose, call Poison Control now: 1-800-222-1222; do not wait for symptoms.

Seek urgent care: new hallucinations, paranoia or manic symptoms; do not take more while seeking advice. A painful/prolonged erection or sudden eye pain with vision changes needs urgent care.

Contact your team: finger/toe color changes, numbness or sores; new tics, severe mood changes or major weight loss. Suicidal thoughts need urgent help.

Early side effects

Less appetite, trouble sleeping, dry mouth, headache, stomach upset or jitteriness can occur. Report persistent anxiety or irritability.

Other effects to discuss

Report feeling flat, a hard evening crash, weight loss or new tics. Your team checks BP/pulse and children's height and weight.

What to keep track of

Track benefit, sleep, meals, weight and mood. Keep follow-up visits so your team can adjust treatment safely.

Before you start

Discuss heart problems, fainting, family sudden death, high BP, bipolar disorder/psychosis, seizures, tics, eye disease, eating concerns, pregnancy/nursing and kidney/liver disease. Share all medicines and substance use. Avoid driving until you know its effects. Tell your surgery team you take it.

Medicines & interactions

MAOIs: do not combine

Do not take it during or within 14 days after an MAOI, including linezolid or IV methylene blue. Switching requires your clinician's timing plan.

Other prescriptions

Review antidepressants, risperidone and blood-pressure medicines. Ask before starting, stopping or changing a medicine; combinations may need monitoring.

Cold remedies and supplements

Decongestants and other stimulants can increase BP or pulse. Check antacids/acid reducers and supplements with your pharmacist; do not use them to change the effect.

Alcohol and caffeine

Avoid alcohol until you have discussed it with your team. Limit excess caffeine and energy drinks, especially with poor sleep, jitteriness or a racing heart.

Everyday tips

Eat breakfast and plan meals even with less appetite.

Use reminders, routines and practical ADHD supports.

Keep a sleep schedule; do not chase fatigue with extra doses.

Arrange appointments and prescriptions before you run out.

Your questions, answered

What if I miss a dose?

Never double. If it is nearly time for the next dose, skip the missed one. Avoid taking XR late; ask your pharmacist for a plan that fits your schedule.

Will it change my personality?

It should help you do what matters. Feeling unlike yourself, flat, irritable or overly driven is a reason to review the dose—not something you must put up with.

Can I stop or become dependent?

Physical dependence is possible and differs from addiction. Plan stopping with your team; fatigue, low mood and returning ADHD symptoms can follow. Severe depression needs urgent help.

What about pregnancy or breastfeeding?

Make a plan with your prescriber and pregnancy team. Most information comes from methylphenidate, a related medicine. If nursing, watch the baby's feeding, sleep and growth; report concerns.

Storage & safety

Keep in the original container, locked away from children, pets and others, at room temperature away from heat and moisture. Never share. Use a pharmacy medicine take-back program for unused doses.

A final reminder

Follow your prescribed plan.

About this information

For general information only; not a substitute for individualized medical advice. This sheet does not cover every risk or interaction. Ask your prescriber or pharmacist before changing how you take this medication.

Sources

1. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=1a1da905-42a0-4748-9c39-67eca45deccc>
 2. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a603014.html>
 3. <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/methylphenidate/>
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Educational inclusion does not mean this medication or its indications are treated at this practice. Review the guide for your exact product with your prescriber or pharmacist.

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