

Methylphenidate (d,l)

Ritalin / Concerta and other formulations

A stimulant for attention and follow-through. The right product and timing should make your day more manageable.

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

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

USE YOUR PRESCRIBED DOSE

TIMING DEPENDS ON YOUR EXACT PRODUCT

ADHD treatment; some products also treat narcolepsy ·
Schedule II controlled medicine · Never share.

What it is used for

It treats ADHD alongside practical supports at home, school or work. Some short-acting products also treat narcolepsy, which causes severe daytime sleepiness.

Age limits and uses differ between products. Ask which condition your prescription treats; more energy alone is not the treatment goal.

How it works

It keeps dopamine and norepinephrine available longer. These brain messengers help with attention and impulse control.

Taking extra or using it differently can cause addiction, overdose or death. Long-acting forms are not misuse-proof.

What to expect over time

THE FIRST DAY

Benefit may begin the same day; onset depends on the product.

THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

Your team adjusts dose and timing against daily goals and side effects.

THE RIGHT FIT

Better function without unacceptable changes in sleep, appetite or mood.

Taking your medication

Follow your bottle. Most products are taken in the morning; Jornay PM is taken in the evening, not the morning. Do not switch products yourself.

Swallow Concerta whole. Open a capsule or chew a tablet only if your exact product allows it. Ask about meals and liquid measuring instructions.

Daytrana patch: follow application/removal times; avoid heat and never cut it. Report rash or skin-color loss. Read its separate instructions.

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.

Get urgent help: new hallucinations, paranoia, manic symptoms or suicidal thoughts. Do not take more while seeking advice. A painful/prolonged erection needs immediate care.

Call promptly: eye pain or vision changes; cold, discolored, numb or sore fingers/toes. Report new tics, severe mood changes or major weight loss.

Early side effects

Less appetite, poor sleep, headache, stomach upset, dry mouth or jitteriness can occur. Report persistent anxiety or a racing heart.

Other effects to discuss

Feeling flat or having an evening crash deserves a dose/timing review. Weight loss and slower growth in children need monitoring, not just reassurance.

What to keep track of

Track benefit, meals, sleep and mood. Keep BP/pulse, weight and growth checks. Ask whether your exact product needs blood tests.

Before you start

Discuss heart problems, fainting, family sudden death, high BP, bipolar disorder/psychosis, seizures, tics, eye disease, GI narrowing, substance use and all medicines. Make an individual pregnancy or nursing plan. If nursing, monitor the baby's feeding, sleep and weight. Tell your surgery team you take methylphenidate.

Medicines & interactions

MAOIs: do not combine

Do not take methylphenidate during or within 14 days after an MAOI, including linezolid or IV methylene blue. Your clinician must plan switching.

Other prescriptions

Review antidepressants, risperidone, blood-pressure medicines, blood thinners and seizure medicines. Starting, stopping or changing them may need monitoring.

Cold remedies and caffeine

Check decongestants and supplements with your pharmacist. Other stimulants and excess caffeine or energy drinks can worsen jitteriness, BP or a racing heart.

Alcohol and cannabis

Discuss these openly with your team. They can worsen side effects or impairment. Do not use them to manage a stimulant's effects yourself.

Everyday tips

Plan regular meals even when you feel less hungry.

Use reminders, routines and practical ADHD supports.

Protect sleep; never take extra to push through fatigue.

Arrange appointments and prescriptions before you run out.

Your questions, answered

What if I miss a dose?

Never double. Ask how late your product can be taken. Skip if the next dose is near. For Jornay PM, take it that same evening if remembered; if it is morning, skip until the next evening.

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 treatment—not something to put up with.

Can I stop or become dependent?

Plan stopping with your team. Physical dependence differs from addiction; both are possible. Fatigue, low mood and returning symptoms may follow stopping. Severe depression needs urgent help.

What about growth or treatment breaks?

Track children's height and weight. Poor growth may mean changing treatment or a supervised break. Do not assume catch-up growth or that weekends off are right for everyone.

Storage & safety

Store locked away from children, pets and others, in the original container. Use a pharmacy take-back program; Daytrana has separate patch-disposal instructions. Never share. Avoid driving until you know your response.

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=1a88218c-5b18-4220-8f56-526de1a276cd>
 2. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a682188.html>
 3. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=2c312c31-3198-4775-91ab-294e0b4b9e7f>
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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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