



MEDICATION INFORMATION

(Adapted with permission from Louisiana Capital Area CHADD)

CHADD OF UTAH

The decision to place a child on medication of any type may be a difficult one for parents to make. Not every parent will choose to place his or her child with AD/HD on medication, nor will every child with an Attention Deficit Disorder need or respond well to medication. The most important thing for parents to do is to get very educated about the pros and cons of taking medication before making the final decision.

- Find out the “real facts.” Become informed consumers. There are many blown out of proportion stories in the media about some of the medications used to help people who have AD/HD. Research studies done by the National Institute of Mental Health in the last few years have shown that medication can be an effective part of treatment for those who have AD/HD.
- It is important to understand that medication is not a diagnostic tool. A proper evaluation should be done before medication is ever considered. Intervention strategies at home and school should be tried before a child is put on medication.
- It is also important to get effective treatment, whatever option is chosen.

There is no cure for AD/HD, but there are ways to relieve AD/HD symptoms. AD/HD medications are much like eyeglasses for a child with vision problems. Medications given in the proper dosage can help a distractible child focus. If the family decides that medication is the best option, many doctors feel that just using medication is not enough. A combination of appropriate medication and behavior management will probably produce the best results. In determining the appropriate dosage and timing on the selected medication, both parents and teachers need to be aware of 1) the possible effects of medication, 2) what medication can and cannot do, and 3) potential side effects.

What Medicines Can Do

Decrease the activity level

- Child can sit still longer
- Child fidgets and runs around less

Allow child to focus for longer periods

- Child can do more accurate work
- Child can work for longer periods
- Child can listen to others for longer periods

Decrease impulsivity

- Child is able to comply with rules better
- Child is able to think before acting

Decrease reactivity

- Child exhibits less aggressive behavior

What Medicines Can't Do

Can't teach good behavior

- Doesn't remove old behaviors
- Doesn't teach reflective thinking

Doesn't teach child to deal with feelings

- Doesn't teach child to deal with anger
- Doesn't teach child how to deal with frustration
- Doesn't make child happy

Doesn't teach skills the child missed

- Doesn't teach child old schoolwork
- Doesn't teach the child social skills
- Doesn't teach the child what to focus on

Doesn't motivate the child

- Doesn't make the child try new skills

Once the parents and the doctor have decided which medication may be best for a child, the doctor will prescribe a very low dose of that medication and observe the effectiveness of the medication and dose. If the improvements are not apparent, the doctor may slowly increase the dose. During this time, parents, teachers, and others in the child's life should monitor his/her symptoms and side-effects. The most common side-effects are stomach aches and decreased appetite. The goal is to find a dose that has maximum symptom relief and minimum side-effects. Sometimes the first medication does not work, or the side-effects are too strong and another medication should be tried. This process may take a few weeks or months.