



# Management of the Side Effects of ADHD Medication

*Medical treatment, as part of a multimodal approach, is designed to improve the functioning and quality of life of people with ADHD. If you experience side effects, do not hesitate to talk to your health professional.*

## General Principles for Reducing Side Effects

- ❑ Gradually adjusting the dose and taking the medication regularly reduce the presence of side effects.
- ❑ Knowing the time of day when side effects appear can help you and your doctor choose one of the following options:
  - ➔ Adjusting the dose
  - ➔ Changing the dosing interval
  - ➔ Changing medications
- ❑ If the side effects are persistent, intense or debilitating, you and your doctor should consider the following options:
  - ➔ Changing medications
  - ➔ Reducing the dose or interrupting treatment over specific periods (e.g., weekends or holidays)
  - ➔ Stopping the treatment

Always weigh the side effects against the benefits that the treatment brings to your daily functioning and quality of life. The search for this balance helps guide the decision whether to continue, change or stop a medication.



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## Specific Side Effects: What to Do?

### Loss of appetite

- ✓ *Change your food intake: eat smaller portions or snacks, eat a light meal in the evening, and avoid drinking fluids before meals.*
- ✓ *Increase the calorie intake of the meal. Choose healthy foods with a higher fat content (e.g., 2% fat or greater instead of 0% fat).*
- ✓ *Consider having a liquid meal: smoothies, hearty soups, etc.*

### Nausea/Stomach pain

- ✓ *Take your medication after a meal (on a full stomach).*

### Mood shifts

- ✓ *Tell your doctor about any significant mood shifts, such as an unpleasant feeling of nervousness, agitation, sadness, moodiness, or impatience, feeling quick to anger or less tolerant, or experiencing the “zombie” effect.*

### Headaches

- ✓ *Headaches are generally mild and temporary. Take acetaminophen as needed.*

### Dry mouth

- ✓ *Drink more water and chew (sugarless) gum.*
- ✓ *Be conscientious about brushing your teeth (less saliva increases the risk of cavities).*

### Heart palpitations, changes in pulse rate and blood pressure

- ✓ *Tell your doctor about any significant variations in your pulse rate or blood pressure.*
- ✓ *Be careful about using stimulants, such as coffee and energy drinks, and salt in your diet.*

### Sleep problems

- ✓ *Work on achieving healthy sleep (see the infosheet “ADHD and Leading a Balanced Life”).*

### Exacerbation of tics

- ✓ *Some ADHD medications may exacerbate pre-existing tics (Tourette syndrome) but do not cause them.*
- ✓ *Tell your doctor if tics appear or increase.*



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