

Managing Stimulant Side Effects

Although the stimulants are quite safe and generally well tolerated, you may experience some side effects. Some of these may disappear on their own as your body adjusts to a new medication or a new dose. Most side effects can be reduced by lowering your dose, but you may then not get as much benefit as you would like, so a balance needs to be struck. The following strategies may be helpful as well. If not, then you may do better by switching to a different kind of stimulant.

Insomnia

- Take your medication earlier
- If you take a second dose at midday, then reduce that dose
- Reduce the morning dose

Appetite Suppression

- Take your medication after breakfast
- If a big lunch is too much, then eat several smaller meals through the day
- Make up for lost calories by eating a larger dinner or having a healthy snack at night

Edginess, Agitation, or Irritability

- Start on a low dose and increase it slowly

Irregular Pulse, Tachycardia, or Elevated Blood Pressure

- Treat pre-existing cardiac issues first before starting stimulant, then adjust as necessary

Stomachache and Headache

- Take medication with food
- Change to a different formulation

Rebound

- Switch to a longer lasting formulation
- Add in a small amount of a short acting formulation one hour before rebound tends to begin

Nervousness or Jitteriness

- Start on a low dose and increase it slowly
- Keep in mind that any feelings of anxiety are probably just a safe and temporary adjustment to the medication

Spaced Out

- Lower the dose
- Change the timing or type of formulation you are taking

Hypomania or Mania

- Immediately stop taking the stimulant and contact your medical professional
- A mood stabilizer may be necessary to control your elevated mood
- Re-evaluate whether ADHD is the appropriate diagnosis

Psychosis

- Immediately stop taking the stimulant and contact your medical professional
- Another medication may be necessary to control your altered state
- Re-evaluate whether ADHD is the appropriate diagnosis

Tics

- Evaluate the degree to which the stimulant is making your tics worse
- Reduce the dose to find a better balance between addressing the ADHD and tolerating the tics
- Treat the tics with another medication

Dizziness

- If you experience the dizziness when the medication is at its strongest, then either reduce the dose or switch to an extended release formulation

Withdrawal

- This is unlikely to occur at normally prescribed dosages, but any symptoms should be temporary as your body re-adjusts

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