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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Atomoxetine

Strattera / Generic capsules

A guide for adults taking atomoxetine.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

TAKE EVERY DAY AS PRESCRIBED | SWALLOW CAPSULES WHOLE

Formulations: Oral capsules are taken once daily or in two divided doses. Dose increases may be slower with certain interacting medicines or liver impairment.

What it is used for

Atomoxetine is a nonstimulant treatment for ADHD. It is taken regularly to improve attention and reduce impulsivity or hyperactivity, rather than as an occasional dose for a demanding day.

How it works

It blocks norepinephrine reuptake, increasing the availability of this chemical messenger in pathways involved in attention and self-regulation.

What to expect over time

Benefit builds over weeks. An early change may be subtle, and fuller improvement can take longer than with a stimulant.

Track task completion, distractibility, impulse control, sleep, and appetite. Review the response before deciding that the medication has failed.

Taking your medication

- Take consistently, with or without food. Food may help nausea.
- Swallow capsules whole. Do not open them; the contents can irritate the eyes. If exposure occurs, rinse the eye immediately and obtain medical advice.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Do not exceed the total amount prescribed for a 24-hour period.

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Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Nausea, stomach discomfort, or reduced appetite
- Dry mouth or constipation
- Fatigue, dizziness, or sleep changes
- Sexual or urinary side effects

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Have blood pressure and pulse checked before treatment and during follow-up. Report weight loss, fainting, or difficulty urinating.

A warning about suicidal thoughts applies particularly to children and adolescents. Adults should also report worsening mood, agitation, or unusual behavior promptly.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Tell your provider about serious heart or blood-vessel disease, narrow-angle glaucoma, pheochromocytoma, liver disease, bipolar symptoms, or a family history of sudden cardiac death.

Discuss pregnancy, pregnancy plans, and breastfeeding with your provider. Treatment decisions should consider both the medication and the condition being treated.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Do not combine with an MAOI or take within 14 days of one. The reverse switch also requires a waiting period.

Fluoxetine, paroxetine, and bupropion can raise atomoxetine exposure. Medicines that affect blood pressure or pulse, including decongestants, also need review.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for chest pain, fainting, a seizure, severe allergy, or a painful or prolonged erection.

Prompt medical advice. Stop atomoxetine and seek prompt advice for yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, itching, or right upper abdominal pain. Contact your provider for urinary retention, new mania, or hallucinations.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Is it a controlled stimulant?
No. Atomoxetine is a nonstimulant and is not a controlled substance. It still requires a prescription, monitoring, and consistent use.

Does it need to be tapered?
It generally does not require a taper, but consult with your provider before stopping so the ADHD treatment plan can be reviewed.

Everyday tips

Use a daily reminder; occasional dosing does not give a fair trial.

Keep notes about specific tasks that become easier, as well as side effects.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

DailyMed: Atomoxetine prescribing information (2026)

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.