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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

# Dexmethylphenidate

Focalin / Focalin XR / Generic formulations

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

USE ONLY YOUR PRESCRIBED DOSE

IR AND XR HAVE DIFFERENT SCHEDULES

**Formulations:** Immediate-release tablets and extended-release capsules differ in duration and dosing frequency. A switch needs specific instructions.

## What it is used for

Dexmethylphenidate treats ADHD. It can improve attention, follow-through, and impulse control when the dose and duration match your needs.

## How it works

It slows reuptake of dopamine and norepinephrine. It contains the d-isomer of methylphenidate, so its milligram dose is not directly interchangeable with racemic methylphenidate.

## What to expect over time

Attention or wakefulness may improve on the day a dose is taken. Finding the right dose and duration of coverage usually requires follow-up over several weeks.

Track concentration, task completion, appetite, sleep, and mood. Feeling more alert is useful only if treatment also improves daily functioning.

## Taking your medication

- Take the morning and any later doses at the prescribed times. Do not add late doses to extend coverage.
- Swallow XR capsules whole or sprinkle the entire contents on applesauce and swallow immediately without chewing.
- If a dose is missed, follow your timing plan; skip it if taking it late would interfere with sleep. Never double.

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# Side effects and safety

## Possible side effects

- Reduced appetite or weight loss
- Dry mouth, nausea, or headache
- Trouble sleeping, jitteriness, or irritability
- Increased pulse or blood pressure

## 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 your blood pressure and pulse checked before starting and during treatment. Keep track of weight, sleep, appetite, and any new tics or mood symptoms.

Stimulants carry risks of misuse, addiction, and overdose. Physical dependence can also develop with prescribed use. Discuss any urge to increase the dose or use it differently.

## 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

Discuss heart disease, fainting, high blood pressure, family history of sudden death, seizures, tics, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and substance use.

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 take with an MAOI or within 14 days after stopping one. Linezolid and IV methylene blue also require review.

Decongestants, other stimulants, and large amounts of caffeine can raise pulse or blood pressure. Certain antidepressants and other serotonergic medicines can add risks.

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# Living with your treatment

## When to get help

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

**Prompt medical advice.** Contact your provider right away for hallucinations, paranoia, or unusually high energy with little need for sleep. Report painful or discolored fingers or toes.

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

## Your questions answered

**Should I feel different as a person?**
Treatment should make it easier to manage symptoms. Feeling emotionally flat, unusually driven, or persistently irritable is a reason to review the dose.

**Can I stop or take breaks?**
Consult with your provider. Symptoms can return, and fatigue or low mood may follow stopping. A planned schedule works better than changing doses from day to day on your own.

## Everyday tips

Eat regularly even when you feel less hungry. Keep a consistent sleep schedule.

Use reminders and practical ADHD supports alongside medication. Extra doses should never replace sleep.

Keep your supply locked away and do not share it. Tell testing clinicians about your prescription.

## 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

Official prescribing information: dexmethylphenidate
MedlinePlus: dexmethylphenidate

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