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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Methylphenidate

Ritalin / Concerta / Jornay PM / Other racemic formulations

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

USE YOUR PRESCRIBED DOSE | TIMING DEPENDS ON YOUR EXACT FORMULATION

Formulations: Short-acting and extended-release tablets, capsules, liquids, chewables, dissolving tablets, and patches have different instructions. Most oral formulations are taken in the morning; Jornay PM is taken in the evening.

What it is used for

Methylphenidate treats ADHD; certain formulations also treat narcolepsy. Approved ages and uses differ by formulation, including for skin patches.

How it works

It slows dopamine and norepinephrine reuptake in brain networks involved in attention and alertness. Racemic methylphenidate contains d- and l-isomers.

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

- Follow the exact formulation’s food, timing, swallowing, or patch instructions. Do not convert between them yourself.
- Some capsules can be sprinkled; many extended-release tablets must remain whole. Ask before crushing or opening.
- A missed-dose plan depends on the formulation. Do not take a late replacement or double a dose without instructions.
- For patches, follow the wear-time limit, avoid external heat, and fold used patches adhesive sides together for safe disposal.

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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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METHYLPHENIDATE / 03

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

MedlinePlus: methylphenidate-d-l
Official prescribing information: methylphenidate-d-l

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