

# OPP ADHD Medication Management Parent Resource

Stimulant medications are some of the most effective medications used in psychiatry and up to 96% of patients treated will have ADHD symptom improvement on one of the stimulants. These medications can improve functioning in many areas of your child's behaviors both at home and in school. The combination of medication management with behavior modification at home and school has been shown to be more effective at symptom control than behavior modification alone.

## **Stimulant Effects: Cognitive/ Academic**

- Increase sustained attention and decrease distractibility/impulsivity
- Improve short term memory, motivation, frustration tolerance, and your child's ability to follow directions
- Enhance use of learned strategies for behavior modification
- Math: Increase problem/task completion and decrease errors
- Reading: Increase productivity in reading comprehension, sight vocabulary, and spelling
- Increase percentage of seat work completed in class and improve homework completion
- Improve handwriting

## **Stimulant Effects: Interpersonal/Social**

- Decrease the intensity of your child's behavior, activity, fidgeting, movement, and vocalizations
- Reduce the burden of hyperactive and impulsive behaviors on teachers
- Decrease aggression and oppositional behaviors at home and school
- Allow your child to pay better attention to social cues

All of these benefits allow your child's behavior to improve and therefore teachers and parents tend to become less controlling which creates a positive feedback loop to your child, thus the child feels better about themselves. Untreated ADHD can sometimes lead to anxiety or depression or low self esteem in older children.

## **Stimulant Mechanism of Action**

These medications work by blocking the reuptake of chemical neurotransmitters in the brain- norepinephrine and dopamine. These are the substances that are released between the nerve endings and are used by the brain to help the nerves to communicate with each other and which are involved in helping your brain to focus more clearly and in controlling hyperactivity and impulsivity.

## **Stimulant Medication Side Effects**

The side effects of stimulant medications used to treat ADHD tend to be mild in general and most resolve as your child's body adjusts to starting medication. These effects involve primarily the GI and nervous system. When these effects are mild, continue taking the medication daily as most of these symptoms will resolve over the next week or so.

- Appetite suppression (especially at lunchtime)/ usually improved by dinner when medication has worn off
- Headaches
- Trouble falling asleep
- Abdominal pain
- Some children become more emotional (especially when the meds wear off)
- Some children feel that their personality is dull and they cannot have as much fun

Discontinue use of medication and call for more severe or persistent effects:

- Hallucinations (rare and reversible)
- Dulling of personality to "zombie" state
- Severe irritability leading to aggression
- New or marked worsening of tics

### **Non- Stimulant Medications**

For patients who are unable to tolerate the side effects of stimulant medications, there are non-stimulant medication options available. These medications are not usually recommended as a first line treatment as they are often not as effective in treating all of the symptoms of ADHD. Also, the medications sometimes may be used in combination with stimulant medications in order to achieve better overall symptom control upon further discussion with us.

### **Medication Refills and Follow Up**

The medications used to treat ADHD are controlled substances, meaning that prescriptions are closely monitored. For this reason, and to avoid medical error, it is important that the physician treating your child for ADHD is the one refilling your medication. ADHD requires consistent follow up in order to make sure your child's symptoms are addressed effectively and safely. Your child will need **follow up in the office at least every 3 months** when on a stable dose to monitor growth and screen for side effects. **Visits may be more frequent when the dose of medication is being adjusted.**

**Please plan to schedule your child's ADHD follow up appointment prior to being out of medication refills as refills will not be provided outside of the follow up visit. Our schedule is generally open 3 months in advance so we strongly recommend you schedule the follow up before leaving the office**

When scheduling these appointments, please specify with the front desk that the follow up is for ADHD so that the appropriate amount of time is designated on the physician's schedule.