

Concerta (Methylphenidate Extended-Release): A Guide for Parents

What is Concerta?

Concerta is a long-acting form of methylphenidate, a medication used to treat Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children aged 6 and older. It helps improve focus, attention, and self-control by working on natural chemicals in the brain (dopamine and norepinephrine). Concerta is designed to release medication slowly throughout the day so your child only needs to take it once each morning.

How to Give This Medication

- Give Concerta **once daily in the morning**, with or without food.
 - Your child should **swallow the tablet whole** with a glass of water or other liquid.
 - **Do not** crush, chew, or break the tablet. The tablet is specially designed to release medication slowly. You may notice the empty tablet shell in your child's stool — this is normal and harmless.
 - If your child cannot swallow the tablet whole, talk to your doctor about other options.
-

Dosing

- Most children start at **18 mg once daily**.
 - The doctor may increase the dose by 18 mg each week until the best dose is found.
 - The maximum dose depends on your child's age:
 - Ages 6-12: up to 54 mg per day
 - Ages 13-17: up to 72 mg per day
 - Never change the dose without talking to your child's doctor first.
-

Common Side Effects

These are the most common side effects. They are usually mild and may improve over time:

- **Decreased appetite or weight loss** — This is the most common side effect. Try offering a good breakfast before the medication kicks in, and a larger dinner or evening snack after it wears off.
 - **Headache**
 - **Stomach pain**
 - **Trouble sleeping (insomnia)** — Giving the medication early in the morning can help. Avoid caffeine, especially in the afternoon and evening.
 - **Mood changes**, such as irritability or anxiety
-

Growth Monitoring

Stimulant medications like Concerta may slightly slow your child's growth in height and weight. Your child's doctor will monitor height and weight at regular visits. This effect is generally small (about 1-2 cm less than predicted adult height in some studies) and tends to lessen over time.

When to Call the Doctor Right Away

Contact your child's doctor promptly if you notice any of the following:

- **Chest pain, fainting, or a fast/irregular heartbeat**
- **New or worsening behavioral problems**, such as aggression or hostility
- **Hallucinations** (seeing or hearing things that are not there) or other unusual thoughts
- **New or worsening tics** (sudden, repeated movements or sounds)
- **Numbness, pain, or color changes in fingers or toes** (signs of circulation problems)

- **A prolonged, painful erection** (in boys) — this is rare but requires immediate medical attention
 - **Signs of an allergic reaction:** rash, hives, swelling of the face or throat, difficulty breathing
-

Important Safety Information

- **Tell your doctor** about all other medications, vitamins, and supplements your child takes. Concerta should not be taken with a type of medication called MAO inhibitors (MAOIs) or within 14 days of stopping one.
 - **Tell your doctor** if your child has any heart problems, a family history of sudden death or heart rhythm problems, high blood pressure, mental health conditions, seizures, or a history of tics or Tourette syndrome.
 - **Surgery:** If your child is scheduled for surgery, tell the surgeon and anesthesiologist that your child takes Concerta. It may need to be stopped on the day of surgery.
 - **Storage:** Keep Concerta in a safe, secure place out of reach of children and others. It is a controlled substance and should not be shared.
 - **Missed dose:** If your child misses a morning dose, give it as soon as you remember — but only if it is still morning. Do not give it in the afternoon or evening, as it may cause trouble sleeping. Do not double up on doses.
-

What to Expect

- Concerta typically begins working within about **1 hour** and its effects last up to **10-12 hours**.
- It may take a few weeks of dose adjustments to find the right dose for your child.
- Your child's doctor will want to see your child regularly to check blood pressure, heart rate, height, weight, and how well the medication is working.

- ADHD medication works best when combined with behavioral strategies, structure, and support at home and school.
-

Questions?

Write down any questions or concerns and bring them to your child's next appointment. Always feel free to call your child's doctor or pharmacist if you have questions between visits.