

Ritalin (Methylphenidate) Immediate-Release — Patient Information Handout

What is Ritalin?

Ritalin (methylphenidate) is a prescription medication used to treat Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children aged 6 and older and in adults. It is also used to treat narcolepsy (a sleep disorder). Ritalin helps improve focus, attention, and impulse control.

How to Take Ritalin

- Take Ritalin by mouth, **30 to 45 minutes before meals**, as directed by your doctor.
 - It is usually taken **2 or 3 times per day**.
 - Take your **last dose before 6:00 PM** to avoid trouble sleeping at night.
 - Swallow the tablet whole with water.
 - **Do not** stop taking Ritalin suddenly without talking to your doctor.
 - If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember — but skip it if it is close to your next scheduled dose. Do not double up.
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Common Side Effects

These side effects are usually mild and may improve over time:

- Decreased appetite or weight loss
- Trouble sleeping (insomnia)
- Headache
- Stomach pain or nausea
- Dry mouth
- Nervousness or restlessness

- Fast heartbeat (palpitations)
- Sweating

Tell your doctor if any of these side effects bother you or do not go away.

Serious Side Effects — Call Your Doctor Right Away If You Experience:

- Chest pain, shortness of breath, or fainting
 - New or worsening mood changes, including depression, anxiety, agitation, or unusual thoughts
 - Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there) or paranoia
 - Signs of circulation problems: fingers or toes that feel numb, cold, painful, or change color (pale → blue → red)
 - Painful erection lasting more than 4 hours (priapism) — seek emergency care
 - Seizures
 - Blurred vision or other vision changes
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Important Warnings

- **Heart risks:** Ritalin can raise blood pressure and heart rate. Your doctor should check these regularly. Tell your doctor if you have any heart problems before starting this medication.
- **Growth in children:** Ritalin may slow growth (height and weight) in children. Your doctor will monitor your child's growth during treatment.
- **Mental health:** Ritalin may cause new or worsening psychiatric symptoms, including mania or psychosis, even in people without a prior history. Report any unusual behavior or mood changes.

- **Potential for misuse:** Ritalin is a controlled substance (Schedule II). Take it only as prescribed. Do not share it with others. Keep it in a safe place.
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Who Should NOT Take Ritalin?

Do not take Ritalin if you:

- Are allergic to methylphenidate or any ingredient in Ritalin
 - Are taking or have recently taken a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI)
 - Have glaucoma
 - Have severe anxiety, tension, or agitation
 - Have a history of motor tics or a family history or diagnosis of Tourette syndrome
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Drug Interactions

Tell your doctor about all medications you take, including over-the-counter drugs and supplements. Ritalin may interact with:

- MAO inhibitors (must not be used together)
 - Blood pressure medications
 - Blood thinners (e.g., warfarin)
 - Seizure medications
 - Medications that affect serotonin (risk of serotonin syndrome)
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Storage

- Store at room temperature, away from moisture and heat.
 - Keep out of reach of children.
 - Do not share your medication with anyone else.
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When to Seek Emergency Help

Go to the nearest emergency room or call 911 if you experience:

- Chest pain or difficulty breathing
 - Fainting or loss of consciousness
 - A painful erection lasting more than 4 hours
 - Signs of a severe allergic reaction: swelling of the face, lips, or throat; difficulty breathing; hives
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Follow-Up

Keep all scheduled appointments with your doctor. Regular check-ups are important to monitor blood pressure, heart rate, weight, and height (in children), and to make sure the medication is working well for you.

If you have questions about your medication, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.