

Starter Guide for Parents: Adderall XR (Amphetamine/Dextroamphetamine Extended-Release)

What is Adderall XR?

Adderall XR is a long-acting stimulant medication used to treat Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children aged 6 and older. It contains a mixture of amphetamine salts that help improve focus, attention, and impulse control. The "XR" means extended-release — the medicine is designed to work throughout the school day with just one morning dose, lasting approximately 10–12 hours.

How to Give This Medication

- Give the capsule once daily in the morning, with or without food.
 - Your child should swallow the capsule whole with water.
 - If your child cannot swallow capsules: Open the capsule and sprinkle the entire contents onto a spoonful of applesauce. Your child should swallow the applesauce mixture right away without chewing the beads. Do not save the mixture for later.
 - Do not split or divide the contents of a single capsule into multiple doses.
 - Avoid giving the medication in the afternoon or evening, as it may cause trouble sleeping.
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Starting Dose and Dose Changes

- The typical starting dose for children ages 6–12 is 5–10 mg once daily in the morning.
- The doctor may increase the dose by 5–10 mg each week until the best balance of benefit and side effects is found.
- The maximum recommended dose is 30 mg per day for children ages 6–12.

- For teens ages 13-17, the starting dose is typically 10 mg per day.
 - Do not change the dose on your own. Always follow your doctor's instructions.
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Common Side Effects

Most side effects are mild and may improve over the first few weeks. The most common include:

- **Decreased appetite** — This is the most common side effect. Your child may not feel hungry, especially during the day.
 - **Trouble sleeping (insomnia)** — Giving the medication early in the morning can help.
 - **Stomach pain or nausea**
 - **Headache**
 - **Mood changes** — Some children may seem more irritable, emotional, or anxious.
 - **Mild weight loss** — Related to decreased appetite.
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Tips for Managing Common Side Effects

- **Appetite and weight:** Offer a good breakfast before the medication kicks in. Provide a larger dinner and healthy evening snacks when the medication is wearing off. Pack calorie-rich, nutritious foods for lunch.
 - **Sleep problems:** Make sure the medication is given as early in the morning as possible. Practice good sleep habits (consistent bedtime, no screens before bed, dark and quiet room). Talk to your doctor if sleep problems continue — they may adjust the dose or timing.
 - **Stomach upset:** Giving the medication with food may help.
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What to Watch For — Call Your Doctor If You Notice:

- Significant weight loss or your child is not growing as expected

- Chest pain, fainting, or a fast/irregular heartbeat
 - New or worsening tics (repeated movements or sounds)
 - Unusual behavior changes, such as seeing or hearing things that are not there, extreme mood swings, or new anxiety
 - Numbness, pain, or color changes (pale, blue, or red) in fingers or toes
 - Your child seems overly sad, withdrawn, or "zombie-like"
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Important Safety Information

- **Store the medication in a safe, locked location** out of reach of all children and other household members. This is a controlled substance and accidental ingestion by a young child can be dangerous.
 - **Never share this medication** with anyone else, even if they have similar symptoms.
 - **Do not stop the medication suddenly** without talking to your doctor.
 - **Keep track of doses** — use a pill organizer or checklist to avoid accidentally giving a double dose.
 - **Tell your doctor** about all other medications, vitamins, or supplements your child takes, as some can interact with Adderall XR.
 - **Vitamin C and acidic drinks** (like orange juice) taken around the same time as the medication may reduce how well it works. It is best to avoid large amounts of these close to dosing time.
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Follow-Up Visits

Your child's doctor will want to monitor:

- **Height and weight** regularly (about every 3–6 months) to make sure growth is on track
- **Blood pressure and heart rate** at each visit
- **How well the medication is working** at school and at home

- **Any side effects** your child may be experiencing

Please keep all scheduled follow-up appointments. Bring a list of any concerns or changes you have noticed.

When to Seek Emergency Help

Go to the emergency room or call 911 if your child experiences:

- Chest pain or difficulty breathing
 - Fainting or seizures
 - Signs of a severe allergic reaction (rash, swelling of face/throat, difficulty breathing)
 - Accidental overdose — also call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222**
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Remember

Medication is one part of ADHD treatment. It works best when combined with behavioral strategies, school support, and a structured routine. It may take a few weeks to find the right dose. Keep open communication with your child's doctor about what is working and what is not.