

ADHD INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Frequently Asked Questions About Atomoxetine (*Strattera*)



What is Atomoxetine?

This is a non-stimulant medication for ADHD. It works mainly by increasing the levels of the brain chemical called norepinephrine, which can help improve ADHD symptoms.

What does this medicine do?

It may help improve attention as well as lessen problems with impulsiveness (not thinking before speaking or acting) and hyperactivity. It can take several weeks before your child gets the full benefit from the medicine.

How often does my child need to take this medicine?

Atomoxetine is usually taken once a day. Some children have more side effects when the whole dose is given at once. For those children, the dose may be split. Give half the day's medicine in the morning and half in the late afternoon.

Are there any other medications my child should not take while taking atomoxetine?

If your child takes antidepressants such as *Prozac*, *Paxil*, and other medicines in the group called SSRI's, make sure you discuss it with your child's doctor. This group of drugs may increase the side effects of atomoxetine. Also, if your child

uses the asthma medication, albuterol, your child's pulse may go higher than it would normally.

Is it safe for my child to stop the medicine abruptly?

It is not dangerous if your child stops the atomoxetine suddenly.

Are overdoses of these medicines dangerous?

The major concerns with overdose are increased pulse and blood pressure, as well as possible complications of the nervous system. If an overdose occurs, your child should be seen right away.

What are the side effects of atomoxetine?

Any medication may have side effects, including an allergy to the medicine. Here is a list of potential side effects, ranging from those that happen more often, to those that occur rarely.

More Common

- **Decreased appetite**

It is common for children on these medications to eat less. This change does not usually cause problems, and your child's appetite may improve over time. Your child may lose a small amount of weight, but long-term problems with weight are uncommon.

- **Dizziness**

As with other side effects, this often gets better after several weeks.

- **Drowsiness or fatigue**

This can be bothersome, but there is often improvement after several weeks. If your child seems overly sleepy, try giving half of the prescribed daily dose in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. Another option is to take the medication at bedtime, but you and your doctor may need to determine if your child gets enough benefit from taking it at night.

- **Nausea, vomiting, or stomachache**

Although unpleasant, stomach upset commonly goes away within the first week. If your child has any of these symptoms, try giving the medication with food.

- **Irritability**

As with the other side effects, this often improves over time. Try to be patient during the first few weeks as your child adjusts to the medicine.

Less Common

- **Increases in pulse and blood pressure**

Atomoxetine may cause a small rise in blood pressure or pulse rate. If your child experiences a fast or irregular heart beat, or problems with headaches, let your doctor know. Your child's doctor will check pulse and blood pressure at your child's medication appointments.

Rarely

- **Liver problems**

Rare cases of liver problems have been reported. If your child has any of the following signs, contact your doctor: jaundice (yellow tinge to eyes or skin), severe pain in right upper abdomen, dark urine, or unexplained flu symptoms.

- **Serious heart problems**

Very rarely, chest pain, palpitations, or trouble breathing can occur. This is more likely if your child has a previous heart problem, so discuss this risk with your child's doctor.

- **Suicidal thoughts**

There is a small risk (less than 1 percent) that children and teens will have suicidal thoughts while taking atomoxetine. If your child shows any signs of these thoughts or any worrisome behaviors, call your child's doctor immediately.

Other resources

- If you would like more information about stimulant medications or other ADHD treatment, visit your pediatrician's Home Page at kp.org/mydoctor. You can also request a copy of the patient information tipsheet on stimulant medications.
- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

Web sites

- National Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA): add.org
- Children with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD): chadd.org

Books

- *All About Attention Deficit Disorder*, by Thomas Phelan, 2003.
- *Straight Talk about Psychiatric Medications for Kids*, by Timothy Wilens, 2004.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your child's physician or other health care professional. If your child has persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your child's doctor. If you have questions or need additional information about your child's medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.