

Your Child's ADHD and Mental Health Medication Guide

What to expect, what to watch for, and why regular follow-up matters

A Message for Parents

Starting your child on medication—whether it's for ADHD, anxiety, or emotional difficulties—can bring a mixture of hope, questions, and understandable worry. Please know, you're not alone.

This guide is designed to give you the essential information you need in a clear and supportive way, without frightening or overwhelming you. It outlines how medications work, what to expect in the early days, what to watch out for, and why staying in touch with your child's doctor is so important.

The Medications We May Use

Each child is unique, so we choose medicines based on your child's specific needs—whether it's attention, emotional regulation, sleep support, or anxiety management.

1. Stimulant Medications – for focus, attention, and impulsivity

Medication	Brand Names	Type
<i>Methylphenidate</i>	<i>Ritalin, Concerta, Medikinet, Neucon OROS</i>	<i>Short/Long-acting stimulant</i>
<i>Dexamphetamine</i>	<i>Amfexa</i>	<i>Stimulant</i>
<i>Lisdexamfetamine</i>	<i>Vyvanse</i>	<i>Stimulant</i>

2. Non-Stimulant Medication – when stimulants aren't suitable or need extra support

Medication	Brand Name	Type
<i>Atomoxetine</i>	<i>Strattera</i>	<i>Noradrenaline reuptake inhibitor</i>

3. Other Supportive Medicines

Medication	Brand Name	Use
<i>Risperidone</i>	<i>Risperdal</i>	<i>For severe irritability, aggression, or mood regulation</i>
<i>Melatonin</i>	<i>Circadin / Generic</i>	<i>For settling sleep difficulties and sleep rhythm problems</i>

4. SSRI Antidepressants – often used for anxiety, low mood, or obsessive thinking

Medication	Brand Name	Type
<i>Sertraline</i>	<i>Serdep</i>	<i>SSRI</i>
<i>Citalopram</i>	<i>Cilift</i>	<i>SSRI</i>

When Will Medication Start Working?

Medication Type	How Fast It Works
Stimulants	<i>Usually within 30–60 minutes (first dose)</i>
Atomoxetine	<i>Takes 3–6 weeks for full effect</i>
SSRIs (Serdep, Cilift)	<i>May take 3–6 weeks to show full benefits</i>
Melatonin	<i>Often works the first night it's taken</i>
Risperidone	<i>Effects may be seen in a few days to a week</i>

Note: With **SSRIs and Atomoxetine**, it's important to give the brain time to adjust. Improvements come slowly and steadily. Please don't expect instant changes—patience truly pays off.

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What's Common and Often Settles:

- *Reduced appetite, especially midday (common with stimulants)*
- *Mild headaches or stomach aches (usually brief)*
- *Difficulty falling asleep or light sleep (can improve with time)*
- *A slight change in emotional rhythm during the first few days*

What to Watch For and Let Us Know About:

Symptom	Why It Matters
<i>Appetite loss lasting more than a day</i>	<i>Can affect nutrition and growth</i>
<i>Flat or withdrawn mood</i>	<i>May be dose-related or medication-related</i>
<i>Unusual sadness or irritability</i>	<i>Can sometimes occur with SSRIs or wear-off</i>
<i>New or increased tics</i>	<i>May be related to stimulants – often temporary</i>
<i>Trouble falling asleep or nightmares</i>	<i>Timing of dose may need adjusting</i>
<i>Fast heartbeat or chest pain (rare)</i>	<i>Must be reviewed immediately</i>
<i>Thoughts of self-harm or distressing ideas</i>	<i>Always report immediately—no matter how mild</i>

Why Medication Follow-Up Is So Important

These medications fall under **Schedule 5 or 6 controlled substances**, which means:

- They **affect brain chemistry** and need close monitoring
- They can **interact with other medicines or conditions**
- **Regular check-ups** help keep your child safe, growing well, and getting the right dose

Suggested Follow-Up Schedule

Timeframe	Purpose
1–2 weeks after starting	Review response, check for side effects, fine-tune dose
Monthly (initial phase)	Until we've found the right dose and your child is stable
Every 3–4 months (long-term)	Monitor growth, pulse, blood pressure, sleep, behaviour

Mixing Medicines – Always Check With Us First

If your child starts **any other medication**, including:

- Antibiotics
- Cold and flu medicine
- Allergy tablets
- Herbal supplements or vitamins
- Other psychiatric medications

...please inform us first. Some medications, especially when combined with **SSRIs or stimulants**, can cause unwanted interactions or side effects. Safety first—always.

What You Should Know About SSRIs (Serdep, Cilift)

These medications help regulate brain chemicals linked to **anxiety, low mood, obsessive thoughts, and emotional overload**. They are especially helpful in children and teens who struggle to manage overwhelming emotions, worries, or social anxiety.

- They are **not addictive**
- Effects build slowly over **3–6 weeks**
- It's important not to **stop suddenly**, as this may cause withdrawal effects

- *If your child feels worse before they feel better, please let us know—it's not unusual, and we can help guide you through*
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Need More In-Depth Information?

*I've written a detailed **Medication Guide** and contributed to a book on ADHD and mental health medication. If you'd like more information tailored to your child's needs, we're happy to provide a printed copy at a small nominal cost to cover production.*

Please let us know if you'd like one—we're here to support you with trustworthy, clear, and parent-friendly information.

If You're Ever Unsure – Please Reach Out

*We understand that parenting a neurodiverse child can be both rewarding and challenging. If anything concerns you—no matter how small—**please don't wait**. Early support makes a world of difference.*

Contact Dr John Flett

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We are here to serve and help you.
