

four weekly visits of approximately 30 minutes appear to be more beneficial than fewer weekly visits that last longer. There is no evidence that clinic visits lasting more than 90 minutes are more effective than shorter visits. The greater frequency of clinic visits can help to establish behavioral accountability, contain impulses, and create daily structure.

Resources

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, *TIP # 33*, www.samhsa.gov

Mid-America Addictions Technology Transfer Center (ATTC), pamphlet Item #MI, www.mattc.org



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration



IRETA
Regional Enterprise Tower
425 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1710
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Tel: 412-258-8565
Fax: 412-391-2528

Stimulant Medications



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Purpose

Stimulants are medications that stimulate the central nervous system. Stimulants are used to treat Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which is typically diagnosed in childhood but is also found in adults. ADHD exhibits with short attention span, excessive activity, impulsivity, and emotional development below the level expected for the person's age. Other conditions that may be treated with stimulants are narcolepsy, obesity and sometimes depression. Persons with ADHD generally report that they feel "normal" when taking stimulants. They cite increased concentration, focus, and ability to stay on task and behave appropriately when taking the medications.

Brand Name Stimulants Include:

- Dexedrine
- Adderall, Adderall CII, Adderall XR
- Deoxyn
- Ritalin, Ritalin SR, Concerta, Metadate ER, Metadate CD, Methlyin ER, Focalin

Initial Effects

- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, metabolism
- Feelings of exhilaration
- Increased mental alertness

Chronic Effects

- Rapid or irregular heart beat
- Reduced appetite
- Weight loss
- Heart failure
- Nervousness
- Insomnia

Usual Dose and Frequency

All drugs have specific doses and frequencies. The physician will specify the exact amount of medication and when it should be taken. How much medicine and how often to take it are specified on the prescription bottle. With stimulants there may be periods when the medication is not to be taken.

Potential Side Effects

- Blood disorders (Ritalin & Cylert)
- Change in heart rhythm
- Delayed growth
- Dilated pupils
- Elevated Blood pressure
- Euphoria
- Excitability
- Irritability
- Liver damage (Cylert)
- Loss of appetite
- Rash
- Seizures (Ritalin & Cylert)
- Tourette's syndrome (Cylert)
- Tremor

Potential For Abuse Or Dependence

Prescription stimulant medications may be misused. Recreational or non-medically indicated uses have been reported for performance enhancement and/or weight loss. Persons with ADHD or narcolepsy rarely abuse or become dependent on stimulant medications.

Emergency Conditions

Psychiatric symptoms including paranoid delusions, thought disorders, and hallucinations have been reported when stimulants are used for long periods or taken at high dosages. Overdose with

stimulants is a medical emergency. Seek help immediately.

Cautions

- Doctors and pharmacists should be told about all medications being taken, including over-the-counter preparations.
- Persons taking stimulant drugs should not increase their dose unless this has been **checked with their physician and a change is ordered.**
- If a woman thinks she may be or might get pregnant, she must talk with her doctor about the safety of this medication before starting or continuing the treatment.

Treatment

- ✦ Research has not yet demonstrated the optimal duration, frequency, and format of treatment for stimulant addiction (Higgins and Wong, 1998). Some research suggests that longer treatment durations of 6 or 12 months are associated with better outcomes for cocaine-dependent individuals (Carroll et al., 1993a; Higgins et al., 1993a; Wells et al., 1994), but the research is not consistent and has not evaluated MA treatment.
- ✦ Experience suggests that the duration of the initiating treatment is a minimum of several weeks. Most stimulant-dependent clients require 2 to 4 weeks to establish an initial period of abstinence and to overcome certain cognitive impairments. It is common for programs to encourage frequent visits during the first 2 to 4 weeks of treatment followed by less frequent visits.
- ✦ For clients with stimulant use disorders during this phase, the frequency of visits or sessions seems to be more important than their length. For example, three or