



Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network

1660 Oak Street SE, Suite 230 ▪ Salem, Oregon ▪ 97301

PHONE: (503) 361-2647 ▪ FAX: (503) 585-4989 ▪ www.mvbcn.org

Stimulants

Stimulants are used, quite successfully, in the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, commonly known as ADD or ADHD. They include medications like **Adderall** or **Ritalin**. There are **many different brands for these two major stimulant classes**. Stimulants are FDA approved for ADHD.

Although stimulants can be very helpful, they can cause some side effects that you should know of before accepting treatment with it. The most common is **loss of appetite**. Sometimes stimulants can cause tics, which are purposeless muscle movements. These are not dangerous, but they could be bothersome. Stimulants can also cause children to have reduced energy and umph! They may even look depressed. Alternatively, sometimes stimulants cause children to get too energized and moody. These may be good reasons to talk to your doctor and try something else.

The beneficial effects of stimulants are usually immediate. Children on stimulants are often able to focus better, be calmer and complete tasks like homework and chores. Yet stimulants do not work for a long time (only about 4 hours) and so children often need to take the stimulant three times a day. Dosage ranges are different for each brand. Typically a dose of Ritalin is between 5-20 mg, and daily doses around 40-60 mg. With some extended release preparations (Concerta, Adderall XR), children may only have to take these medications once a day. There are no dietary restrictions.

Sometimes parents and children may decide to not use the medication during holidays, weekends, and summer breaks. This is an acceptable approach. Also some people believe that using stimulants will result in your child having a future drug problem, but in fact your child is more likely to develop issues related to drug addiction and legal problems because of failing in school. Stimulants can help children stay on track academically!

There are supplemental ways to improve focus and attention which include:

- exercise
- good sleep habits
- good eating habits
- develop a reward system to improve focus
- family time and structured activities

If you have further questions about this medication, please ask your medical provider or your pharmacist.

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