

## **Dexamfetamine Medications**

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- **Stimulants( Dexamfetamine and Methylphenidate) are the most effective medication for ADHD**, which is why we are trying this first.
- **'Stimulant' medication** because it **'stimulates dopamine' availability** in the frontal brain ( the executive centre).
- It's been used since the 1940's.
- It's likely the most well-researched medication you'd probably ever take in entire your life ( to establish safety in kids).
- The other stimulant, Methylphenidate can be tried if Dexamfetamine doesn't suit you.
- **Two Forms of Dexamfetamine : Short -Acting and Long-acting**
- **Short -Acting : Each dose starts to work within 45 min, lasts 3-4 hours ( individual variation )**  
**CONTAINS GLUTEN - Do not take if you have gluten intolerance.**

- Long- Acting ( Vyvanse) : ONE CAPSULE A DAY = THE MOST CONVENIENT : A SINGLE dose in the morning, starts to work within 45 min and the benefit will continue on average, 6-12 hours( individual variation) . DOESN'T CONTAIN GLUTEN.

- THE EFFECT ONLY LASTS UNTIL THE END OF THE DOSE ... UNTIL YOU TAKE THE NEXT DOSE... THEREFORE ANY BENEFIT/SIDE-EFFECTS WILL FINISHES BY THE END OF THE DOSE.

\* THE KEY \* , EVENTUALLY, IS TO WORK OUT THE BEST TIME THAT WORKS FOR YOU TO TAKE YOUR MEDICATION TO ENSURE THE BENEFITS LASTS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE ESPECIALLY IN THE AFTERNOONS AND EARLY EVENING - USUALLY THIS MEANS TAKING THE MEDICATION \*BEFORE\* YOUR OWN BRAIN DOPAMINE DROPS OFF !( OR IN THE CASE OF SHORT-ACTING, BEFORE YOUR LAST DOSE COMPLETELY WEARS OFF).

BREAKFAST: YOU CAN DECIDE IF YOU TAKE BEFORE, WITH OR AFTER. EXPERIMENT TO SEE IF MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

CAFFEINE, NICOTINE AND VIT C: AVOID INITIALLY ( OR AT LEAST DELAY). THEN EXPERIMENT TO SEE IF IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

ALCOHOL. AVOID INITIALLY. THEN EXPERIMENT WITH SOMEONE AROUND TO SEE IF IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE( COMMONLY NOT).

- There is **no withdrawal** if you miss taking a dose, like wearing glasses, **you don't have to all the time** , i.e **you decide** whether you want to/need to .  
**School kids stop-and-start their medication every weekend!**
- Therefore, **you can have 'breaks'** ( i.e medication-free days) anytime such as you decide to slow/stop when you experience side-effects , or to help you see if the medication is making difference (on vs off days)..
- You can also **switch up/down** one dose to another on separate days if you're not sure if the higher or lower dose is better ( like fine-tuning a radio).

**Just like ADHD affects individuals differently , how the medication works for you is also Very I n Divi DUAL**

We need to work hard to make sure the medication meets your needs.

My aim is to solve this medication question as efficiently as possible.

**YOUR JOB** is to PAY \*\* **ATTENTION** \*\* AS BEST YOU CAN

**For this reason,** later when the dose of medication is working better for you, and with experience you now understand it more , you may want to go back and re-try the lower doses just to make sure you didn't miss anything the first time round.

Once you find the dose of medication that works best for you, it remains the same dose indefinitely ( it's uncommon to develop tolerance to ADHD medication over time).

However other factors may affect effectiveness of medication from day to day: Eg sleep, exercise, hormonal factors in women etc.

My job is to coach \* **YOU** \* in becoming \***THE EXPERT**\* on your

medication and how you tailor your dose  
from day to day !

You'll learn the best way to use your medication !

**MEDICATION = = = GADGET in YOUR TOOL- BOX.**

( BTW You already have a tool others don't have - 'The  
ADHD Brain' ... more on that later.....)

Medication is just another tool...

... And then there are other tools : Learn \*\* OTHER  
STRATEGIES \*\* ( see later) ... once you're on  
medication( then it becomes much easier to  
incorporate these routinely ).

**UNDERSTAND IT = MASTER IT**

**Knowledge = + POWER +**

That's why knowing about YOUR experience while you  
experiment is the ONLY way to achieve the best outcome  
possible for YOU :

**YES, TRAIL AND ERROR PROCESS , BUT WITH 4 VERY  
CLEAR GOALS IN MIND:**

- \* **MAXIMUM BENEFIT**
- \* **MAXIMUM DURATION ( ADHD doesn't finish at 5pm ! )**

- \* MINIMUM/NO SIDE EFFECTS
- \* MINIMUM DOSE AND and MINIMUM NUMBER of medications !

TO MANAGE ...

WE OBSERVE...

## “ QUESTIONS”

ASK YOURSELF( KEEP A JOURNAL):

“ Take time to reflect on the following questions “:

**At each dose, (*just do your best , its not easy* ) to answer the following:**

- 1) How much time after taking the dose till it works?
- 2) How long it works for?
- 3) What you feel like when it wears off( wears off gradually or quite quickly)?
- 4) What the "therapeutic effect" feels like? How would you describe it in one word?
- 5) Any "side effects" ? Are the side-effects worse at the beginning , middle or end of the dose?

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To help you answer these 5 questions, read the following information to know what to expect and make you make sense of your new experiences ( the numbers correspond to the questions).

## **“ ANSWERS” :**

### ***WHAT TO EXPECT-***

#### **Timing:**

(1) Onset : Generally you should start feeling it work somewhere within 30-60 minutes.

(2) Duration: Short-acting Dex doses lasts 3-4 hours, again the duration varies between individuals.

Long-acting Lisdexamfetamine lasts 6-12 hours.

(3) It is more usual to experience a tapering off in benefits as the dose wears off ( likely longer and more gradual at the Goldilocks Dose) , often imperceptible so you only realise after . However sometimes, if over the Goldilocks dose, the finish may be felt more abruptly ( described as a ‘crash’) - its short-lived, so a brisk walk/exercise can help.

### **THERAPEUTIC EFFECT: Know your ADHD symptoms**

You're not alone: ADHD is a common condition ( 1 in 40 adults)

It's not all bad! The ADHD ( FRONTAL ) BRAIN just works differently ( Neurodivergence) .

## Symptoms can be **STRENGTHS**

'Hyperactivity' <—> Energy

'Impulsivity' <—> Creativity

'Distractibility ' <—> Curiosity

... Albert Eistein, Louis Pasteur, Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, Adam Levine, Justin Beiber, Michael Phelps, will.i.am, Justin Timberlake...

## **ADHD Diagnosis : Permission to be who you are ( Self-Acceptance )**

**Medication can be very effective ( 80 % report noticeable response , making it the **most effective medication out of all medications for the brain-mind**).**

### **MEDICATION LEADS THE WAY TO :**

**IMPROVING MOTIVATION TO “START”, “MAINTAIN” , “APPLY CONSISTENTLY “ :**



**THE : “ I KNOW WHAT TO DO, I JUST CAN’T DO IT ‘TASKS SHOULD BECOME EASIER ( The intention is there !).**

“ LEARNING ADHD-STRATEGIES” ... “MINDFULNESS” ...” HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES” ... “NUTRITION” ...”EXERCISE “ ... “SLEEP” ... “SELF-CARE” ... “STRESS MANAGEMENT”.

( i.e boring, non-urgent, routines!)

You CHOOSE when you use the medication... YOU can decide when to use the medication, from dose to dose, day to day, week to week , month to month.. even year to year .

**‘The BENEFITS VS The BOTHER ‘** of taking medication is an individual decision that will vary THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE.

IT CAN BE useful to help you with SOME of the things that YOU DO.

Some descriptions that have been used for ADHD and how medication can help:

**LIKE :** Wearing GLASSES ( ATTENTION AND FOCUS= LESS FOGGY)

( QUIET MIND = NOT THREE TV’S ALL WITH DIFFERENT CHANNELS ON AT THE SAME TIME )

**LIKE:** A MANUAL CAR ( ADHD feels like only brake or accelerate, burn-out) vs with a clutch ( with medication, can now regulation up and down, do things be degrees from moment to moment.... )

**LIKE :** Medication = Mindfulness: ...Ride the **W A V E** ....

**LIKE** : A bike with GEAR SHIFTS 1-2-3 ( easier with those 'pushing up-hill 'tasks)

**LIKE** : From **HOT** Boss **REACTIVE** Fight! Flight! Freeze! to 'COOL Boss' \*REFLECT\* : STOP \* ... THINK\* ... ACT\*

**LIKE:** More whiteboard S P A C E

**LIKE** : [Post -it notes] [ that stick] [in your Memory]

**LIKE** : ADHD is a Ferrari engine with bicycle brakes - > **BETTER BRAKES**

**The following common symptoms of ADHD should improve during the duration of each dose .**

Poor concentration – Being easily bored, having trouble starting, maintaining focus and task completion, (especially with repetitive, boring, mundane, 'non-urgent 'tasks), distractible, forgetful, 'daydreaming'.

Impulsivity – Seek immediate gratification,( food, spending) impatience, (eg in queues or traffic jams), can be tactless and blurt things out in public, interrupt others, too talkative, tend to seek stimulation and thrills ( dopamine-reward).

Hyperactivity (Overactive) – in adults may be persistent but less obvious (eg tapping, twirling, doodling), vacations are action-packed.

Anxiety

## Insomnia

These symptoms occur across different situations, eg at home, socially and at work.

Make a note of your 'top three' symptoms. Keep a journal to track improvement in these individual symptoms while we progress through treatment to establish effectiveness of medication.

### **(4) THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS :**

**If the dose is TOO HIGH** (i.e overshoot past your **Goldilocks dose**): (or happens that it doesn't suit you, in which case we will change to the alternative stimulant Ritalin ) :

1) side effects which disappeared now recur, and/or  
2) ADHD symptoms seem a bit worse again( compared to Goldilocks dose) such as mild agitation/irritability/overreact, actions feel more compulsive, feeling more distractible or 'a bit spacey', during the dose ( remember any negative effect is gone when the dose wears off in a few hours).

**MEDICATION FEELS LIKE IT WORKS AT you (DON'T FEEL AS MUCH IN CONTROL... LESS OF THE 'RIGHT 'FEELING ).**

- At the \*RIGHT\* dose: medication has a calming effect, and ADHD symptoms improve during the dose :

- MEDICATION seems to work *WITH YOU* ( “...regulate better , do things by degrees, more flexible, more in control...” ) **\*FIND YOUR OWN WORD FOR THIS FEELING\*** : use it as a guide to find the Goldilocks Dose ( i.e is this feeling more/less on this dose ?).

### **(5) SIDE-EFFECTS : Please note down to report !**

EVERY medication has the *potential* for side effects. THIS MEDICATION IS NO EXCEPTION.

All Side-effects, however severe, stops when the medication wears off and no longer taken.

- COMMON ( 8/10 people ) USUALLY SHORT-LIVED, usually disappear AS YOU CONTINUE TAKING THE MEDICATION : losing your appetite, trouble getting off to sleep, dry mouth, nausea or headaches( that’s why its best to avoid caffeine as its side- effects are similar to excessive caffeine). These side effects usually appear EARLY in the first few days and often settle but, if they don’t, you will probably have to reduce the dose to a level where you are still getting good effects from the medication but without unpleasant side effects.

- **Uncommon ( 1/50)**: facial tics, jaw clenching and grinding, muscle pain, cold hands and feet, runny nose. These may not settle, meaning it'll happen every time you take a dose.

**TROUBLE SHOOTING SIDE -EFFECTS :**

**STEP 1:** To tell if it's the medication, **SIDE-EFFECTS won't happen on days you don't take medication. SO, SKIP A DOSE AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS !**

**RARE SIDE- EFFECTS :** muscle pains, chest pain , shortness of breath, irregular heart beat, panic anxiety, suicidal thoughts, hallucinations or paranoid thoughts can develop - usually when taken in high doses or mixed with illicit drugs.

In this case, the stimulants should be ceased immediately and GP/ my advice sought asap.

These medications have been taken for nearly a 100 years, without major problems, in children and adults.

**N.B Long - Acting Medication and Sleep :**

Often sleep improves when ADHD is treated. However, if sleep worsens during the trial because medication is lasting too long , try :

1) taking dose even earlier.

2) try taking 1000mg Vitamin C ( Ascorbic Acid) about 2 hours before bedtime( increases rate of elimination of stimulant med in your system so much less by bedtime )

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**\*\*\* LEARN OTHER STRATEGIES : ADD TO THE TOOL+BOX \*\*\***

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**The following resources are highly recommended**

\* **IF** you only have time to look at **JUST ONE:** \* : “**ADDitude Magazine**” Website ( free)  
( \* everything ADHD can be found on this website \*)

**Recommended Education and Support Resources :**

**Highly recommended:**

- Podcasts:

*In no particular order, try a few and stick with the ones you enjoy most.*

- ADHD Experts ( ADDitude Magazine)
- Taking Control : the ADHD podcast
- Adult Attention Deficit Disorder Centre of Maryland
- More Attention, Less Distracted
- ADHD Support Talk radio
- ADHD Rewired
- Practical ADHD Strategies
- Square Peg Round Hole

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**AND**

*'This Way Up ( CRUFAD, St Vincent's Hospital)'* : Offers a wide range of evidence-based interactive online psychological courses some of which are free (Insomnia, Social anxiety, Worrying, Depression, Well being, Mindfulness and Stress management).

## **ALSO**

- ADHD Coaching - 'ADHD Coaching **Australasia**' ( make sure its this one ) has a listing of Australia's most qualified fully-credentialed ADHD coaches.
  - Youtube videos
  - Jessica McCabe, ' How to ADHD
  - Videos by - Russell Barkley
  - ADHD Australia, National ADHD Helpline, ADHD Foundation, ADHD Support Groups , Facebook
- 'AADPA' - Download the free Consumers Guide to ADHD Treatment
- ADHD Management Apps : ADDitude magazine, Facebook group 'ADHD Apps and Technology 'for the latest.

## Books : Books ( Some available on Audible Books )

- Ed Hallowell : Driven to Distraction, ADHD 2.0
- Russell Barkley : Taking Charge of ADHD
- The Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD ( Lidia Zylovska )

## Dexamfetamine 5mg ( short- acting)

### **Instructions for taking Dexamphetamine 5 mg.**

Please start with half tablet in the morning ( eg with breakfast) , and then see how you feel. If nothing much happens, it is likely that you will need a higher dose to get the benefit from the medication and should therefore increased as recommended below.

The final dose that suits you is a balance between the good effects (eg feeling calm, improved concentration and organisation) and side-effects.

Generally the idea is :

- 1) keep gradually increasing the number of tablets, for each dose, until the dose is 'too strong' ( i.e side-effects or reduction in effect(worsening of ADHD symptoms, such as irritability, hyperfocusing, flattened mood/'spacey').
- 2) Then you take the dose below the one that was 'too strong ' dose- this is your Goldilocks Dose which you will now take every time you wish to take a dose (two or three times a day , depending on how it affects your sleep).

Do not go to more than 2 tablets (per dose) without a medical review.



Common side effects occur in 80% of patients taking this medication for the first time : such as losing your appetite, trouble getting off to sleep, dry mouth, nausea or headaches.

These side effects usually appear in the first few days and then settle but, if they don't, you will probably have to reduce the dose to a level where you are still getting good effects from the medication but without unpleasant side effects.

**Stimulant medications are Schedule 8 -category government controlled medications, as such specialists are bound by strict Department of Health regulations regarding scripts and prescribing. Take care of your medications and scripts- they are irreplaceable !**

Rarely, suicidal thoughts and psychosis ( hallucinations or paranoid thoughts) can develop - usually when taken in high doses or mixed with excessive alcohol and illicit drugs. In this case, the stimulants should be ceased immediately and doctor's advice sought as soon as possible.

### Medical Health Risks:

In patients with existing heart disease( or family history of early heart disease) , there is a risk of sudden death and abnormal heart rhythm when stimulant medication is used. That is why we have screened you already regarding your cardiac history. If you have become aware of new information regarding your heart health, stop your medication and let your doctor know as soon as possible.

If you have become aware of new information regarding glaucoma or have an increased risk, stop your medication and

let your doctor know as soon as possible. If in doubt, please check with your GP or optometrist.

Pregnancy and Breast-Feeding: The medications used to treat ADHD — including Dexamfetamine, Vyvanse, and Ritalin, Concerta — are best considered unsafe during pregnancy, leading to low birth weight, premature birth and possibly heart defects. The safest advise is to stop using these medications BEFORE falling pregnant. These medications may also be transferred through breast milk after birth, and so agin the advice is not to breastfeed while on this medication.

### **Initiating and Up-Titrating : Suggested Regime**

In general :

- take medication doses at least 3 hours apart

Example of timing :

Breakfast (B) : 9am

Lunch( L) : 12pm

Afternoon Tea: 3pm ( Optional , take only if sleep is not affected/is improved- take the same dose as the Lunch dose).

**This is an example of how you may progress increasing your dose.**

**Anytime you reach your 'too strong 'dose, then take the dose below ( = your Goldilocks Dose) as regularly as you can( remember okay to miss doses, either accidentally or**

**intentionally) , i.e you needn't continue with the rest of the progression.**

Dose/Day:

1 : B- Half tablet

2 : B- Half tablet

3 : B- ONE tablet

4 : B- ONE tablet

5: B- ONE tablet, L: ONE tablet

6 : B- ONE tablet, L: ONE tablet

7 : B- ONE tablet, L: ONE tablet

8: B- ONE + HALF tablets, L: ONE + Half tablets

9: B- ONE + HALF tablets, L: ONE + Half tablets

10: B- TWO tablets, L: TWO tablets

11: B- TWO tablets, L: TWO tablets

11: B- TWO tablets, L: TWO tablets

AND SO ON. ...

As soo as you've found your Goldilocks dose, continue to take this dose every time, either two or three times a day.

... If TWO tablets per time is the best dose, continue on this dose, two or three times a day, until your medical review.

**If side effects occur, either cease altogether or take at lesser dose.**

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**In case of emergency, cease medication and present to local GP or hospital.**

**VYVANSE ( Lisdexamfetamine) : ‘Long - Acting’ Dexamfetamine medication.**

- **There are 6 different dose strengths : 20mg, 30mg, 40mg, 50mg, 60mg, 70mg.**
  
- **!!! “At the start, as the medication is new to you, we don’t know what dose of Vyvanse will be MOST helpful for you !!!**
  
- **That dose , which is the ‘sweet spot ’, is your ‘Goldilocks Dose ’ which is a term we’ll be using a lot in your treatment pathway” !!!**
  
- **THEREFORE we’ll start with the lowest dose possible and work through :**

**\* TO TRY EVERY DOSE \* ..... \*IN ORDER \* .....\***  
**STOPPING AS SOON AS WE REACH YOUR**  
**GOLDILOCKS DOSE \***

**START** at 10mg for a couple of days just to test for side-effects, and if that's ok ...Now, go ahead and try the 20mg dose for a few more days, and if that's ok and minimal side-effects...Now, go ahead and try the 30mg dose for a few more days ...***And So On...***

- **On average** , most people find their Goldilocks is somewhere between 30 to 70mg.
- **The process is like trying to find a radio station for the first time, slowly tuning in to get the best signal** As long as each dose is better than the last, we keep try the next dose up.
- **Stay on each dose for a reasonable number of days**, to ensure a confident assessment, if there's minimal/no side effects and the effect is even better than the last dose, try the next dose up until you reach a dose where the higher dose makes no difference ( so may as well just use the lower dose) , or the higher dose feels a bit too strong meaning (1) side-effects appear/persist , or (2) your ADHD symptoms regresses during the dose( eg increased hyperfocusing).. more on this later...
- **Therefore, using this principle, the Goldilocks Dose( your best dose) , is *the dose one BELOW* the dose that's a BIT TOO STRONG. .**

- **The aim is to reach a single dose of Vyvanse that is sufficient in both benefit and duration for your daily needs.** If at the Goldilocks dose, the duration is not long enough for your needs, we can discuss adding a short-acting tablet which only lasts 2-3 hours( Dexamfetamine 5mg) as a 'chaser top-up dose' ( we'll discuss this at the next stage of your treatment pathway).

## **VYVANSE : TECHNIQUE FOR MAKING UP THE DIFFERENT DOSES**

**You have been supplied with Vyvanse 50mg Dose.**

**There are 30 small capsules in the bottle.**

**Count 10 capsules and put them aside - I suggest wrapping tightly in cling wrap and place back in the same container.**

**Important: We need these 10 capsules in a few weeks.**

**You now have 20 capsules for the trial.**

## **TECHNIQUE**

**Get a container with 100ml markings ( water bottle/jug/ any container with even flat base and straight sides )**

(1) **Fill to 500ml** with water (cold or room temperature, not hot ).

(2) **Take one capsule**, and over the mouth of the container in case it spills , pull capsule apart and shake the powder into the water, check both halves are fully emptied..

(3) **Stir well** with a spoon ( if from the night before, stir well before drinking). Vyvanse dissolves completely( some non-active filler may not dissolve).

Therefore because you now have 50mg of Vyvanse dissolved in 500ml of water, therefore each 100ml of this solution = 10mg dose.

**THEREFORE :**

**10mg Dose** = Drink 100ml only, in one go - TAKE for 1-2 DAYS

**20mg** = Drink 200ml- eg TAKE 2-4 DAYS

**30mg** = Drink 300ml- TAKE AT LEAST 5 DAYS

**40mg** = Drink 400ml- TAKE AT LEAST 5 DAYS

**50mg** = Just swallow ONE whole unopened capsule.

( If more convenient, make up the night before, though ensure its kept safely in the fridge !!)

I recommend : **MAKE A NEW BATCH** , **FOR EVERY DOSE**

**DRINK AMOUNT REQUIRED ONLY** , AND **DISCARD THE REMAINDER.**

Until the next review, you can try up to 50mg( i.e as long as 50mg dose is better than 40mg).

- Try and take the same dose for at least over 3-5 days ( I suggest slowing down, by spending more time when you feel you're close to your Goldilocks dose, just like tuning into a radio station) to get a good idea of what each dose is like before moving on.

N.B Long - Acting Medication and Sleep :

Often sleep improves when ADHD is treated. However, if sleep worsens during the trial because medication is lasting too long , try :

- 1) taking dose even earlier.



2) try taking 1000mg Vitamin C ( Ascorbic Acid) about 2 hours before bedtime( increases rate of elimination of stimulant med in your system so much less by bedtime )