



**The drugs usually prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)** are generally effective and safe.

Most children and teenagers (60 percent to 80 percent) who take them become less hyperactive and impulsive, are better able to focus, and are less disruptive at home and school. Adults with ADHD also appear to benefit from taking medication. But you should know that there is no good evidence showing the benefits of at least one stimulant, methylphenidate, last for longer than a few years.

To help you and your doctor choose the right ADHD medicine if you need one, *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs* has evaluated the drugs in this category based on their effectiveness, safety, and cost. This 2-page brief is a summary of a 24-page report you can access for free on the Internet at [ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs](http://ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs). This Web site also has other free reports about other drugs we've analyzed.

**DO YOU NEED AN ADHD DRUG?**

Diagnosis of ADHD can be difficult, and a variety of medical and psychiatric disorders can cause similar symptoms. As a result, many children and teenagers taking ADHD medicines may either not have ADHD or have only mild symptoms that do not require medication. Be sure to get a careful diagnosis from a physician or mental health professional with expertise in ADHD and a second opinion if you have doubts.

The symptoms in the chart below can help you figure out if you or your child should be assessed for ADHD by a doctor or mental health expert.

Our independent evaluations are based on scientific reviews conducted by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. Grants from the Engelberg Foundation and the National Library of Medicine help fund *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs*. These materials were made possible by a grant from the state Attorney General Consumer and Prescriber Education Grant Program, which is funded by the multi-state settlement of consumer fraud claims regarding the marketing of the prescription drug Neurontin (gabapentin).

**The Symptoms of ADHD**

If you or your child has six or more of the following symptoms and behavioral patterns – from either list – persistently for six months, ADHD may be the cause.

**Inattention**

- Difficulty paying attention to details
- Frequent hasty mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
- Difficulty sustaining attention in performing tasks or play activities
- Difficulty listening when spoken to directly
- Unable or slow to complete assignments and tasks
- Difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Difficulty with tasks that require sustained mental effort
- Loses things necessary for tasks or activities
- Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli or sights or sounds
- Easily bored
- Forgetful in daily activities
- Tendency to daydream

**Hyperactivity and Impulsivity**

- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
- Leaves seat in classroom or in situations in which remaining seated is expected
- Runs around excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate
- Difficulty engaging in leisure activities in a quiet manner
- "On the go" or acting as if "driven by a motor" much of the time
- Excessive or impulsive talking
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Difficulty in waiting for his or her turn to speak
- Interrupts or intrudes on others
- Hot-tempered; easily agitated or angered
- Low tolerance of stress

**Our Recommendations**

Our analysis found no evidence that any ADHD drug is more effective than another. Taking into account the evidence for effectiveness, safety, dosing convenience, duration of action, and cost, we have chosen the following as *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs* to treat ADHD:

- Dextroamphetamine
- Dextroamphetamine sustained-release or long-acting tablets
- Methylphenidate tablets (Methylin or generic)
- Methylphenidate sustained-release tablets or capsules (10 mg—Methylin only [no generic available]; and 20 mg—generic or Methylin.) Note: If you need 30 mg or more, your options are limited to three significantly more expensive drugs—Metadate CD, Ritalin LA, or Concerta













These four medicines are part of a class known as stimulants and have a long track record that shows they're safe and effective. All four are also available in low- or moderate-cost generic or "branded" generic forms. Their monthly costs range from \$11 to \$70.

ADHD drugs also carry risks. The most serious are rare reports of sudden death, stroke, and heart attack. All children taking them should be evaluated for underlying heart problems since such children may be at higher risk of sudden death. The drugs should not be used in adults with heart problems or abnormalities.

Other serious side effects include suppression of growth (height or weight) in children, blurred vision and other visual disturbances, psychotic symptoms, such as delusional thinking or hallucinations, and an increased risk for seizures.

*This information was released and last updated in July 2010*

## ADHD Drugs: Cost Comparison\*

Generic Name and Strength <sup>1</sup>	Brand Name	Drug is a Generic? <sup>2</sup>	Frequency of Use Per Day <sup>3</sup>	Average Monthly Cost <sup>4</sup>
Amphetamine mixture 10 mg tablet	Adderall	No	One to Two	\$140 - \$280
Amphetamine mixture 10 mg tablet	Generic	Yes	One to Two	\$32 - \$61
Atomoxetine 10 mg capsule	Strattera	No	One	\$236
 Dextroamphetamine 5 mg tablet	Generic	Yes	One to Two	\$11 - \$22
 Dextroamphetamine 10 mg tablet	Generic	Yes	One to Four	\$16 - \$64
Dextroamphetamine 5 mg Sustained release capsule	Dexedrine	No	One	\$81
 Dextroamphetamine 5 mg Sustained release capsule	Generic	No	One	\$60
Dextroamphetamine 10 mg Sustained release tablet	Dexedrine	No	One	\$95
 Dextroamphetamine 10 mg Sustained release capsule	Generic	No	One	\$60
Dexmethylphenidate 10 mg Sustained release capsule	Focalin XR	No	One	\$211
Lisdexamfetamine 20 mg capsule	Vyvanse	No	One	\$197
Methamphetamine 5 mg tablet	Desoxyn	No	One to Five	\$170 - \$848
 Methylphenidate 5 mg tablet	Methylin	BG	Two	\$16
Methylphenidate 5 mg tablet	Ritalin	No	Two	\$62
 Methylphenidate 5 mg tablet	Generic	Yes	Two	\$27
 Methylphenidate 10 mg tablet	Methylin	BG	Two	\$22
Methylphenidate 10 mg tablet	Ritalin	No	Two	\$86
 Methylphenidate 10 mg tablet	Generic	Yes	Two	\$32
Methylphenidate 10 mg Sustained release tablet	Metadate ER	BG	One	\$47 <sup>5</sup>
 Methylphenidate 10 mg Sustained release tablet	Methylin ER	BG	One	\$32
Methylphenidate 18 mg Sustained release tablet	Concerta	No	One	\$205
 Methylphenidate 20 mg Sustained release tablet	Methylphenidate ER	Yes	One	\$32
 Methylphenidate 20 mg Sustained release tablet	Methylphenidate SR	Yes	One	\$25
Methylphenidate 20 mg Sustained release tablet	Metadate ER	BG	One	\$42
 Methylphenidate 20 mg Sustained release tablet	Methylin ER	BG	One	\$31
Methylphenidate 20 mg Sustained release tablet	Ritalin SR	No	One	\$98
Methylphenidate 20 mg Sustained release capsule	Metadate CD	No	One	\$167
Methylphenidate 5 mg chewable tablet	Methylin	No	Two	\$203
Methylphenidate 5 mg/5 ml solution	Methylin	No	Two to 12	\$230 - \$1,381
Methylphenidate 10 mg/5 ml solution	Methylin	No	Two to Six	\$381 - \$1,162
Dextroamphetamine 5 mg/5 ml solution	LiquADD	BG	One to Eight	\$77 - \$619 <sup>5</sup>
Methylphenidate 10 mg/9 hr disc	Daytrana	No	One	\$254

\* Selected drugs and dosages only. For a complete price list, go to [ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs](http://ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs) to download the free, full 24-page report.

1. Not all dose forms are listed. Higher doses, not generally or widely used in children, are not represented.

2. BG indicates that the drug is a "branded generic," a medicine that is generic but given a special name by its maker for marketing purposes.

3. As typically prescribed, but dosing varies with these drugs.

4. Monthly costs reflect national average retail prices for May 2010, rounded to the nearest dollar. Information derived by *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs* from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Pharma Solutions, which is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.

5. Price is based on a low prescription volume of less than 20 prescriptions filled per month.

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