

Guanfacine

Intuniv (extended-release), Tenex (immediate-release), a non-stimulant medicine that calms the brain's alarm system

This medicine turns down impulsiveness, big reactions, and hyperactivity, and it is not a stimulant.

WHAT IT TREATS

ADHD, tics; blood pressure

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Once daily, often at bedtime

WHEN IT WORKS

1 to 2 weeks; more by 6

HABIT FORMING

No; but do not stop suddenly

✔ This medicine carries **no special FDA safety warning** of that kind.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Guanfacine** works on a brain system that helps with self-control, so reactions get smaller and pauses get longer.
- The extended-release form is approved for ADHD in ages **6 to 17**, alone or added to a stimulant to smooth the day.
- It often helps most with hyperactivity, blowing up over small things, arguing, and trouble winding down at night.
- The same medicine is also a blood pressure medicine, which explains the drowsiness and the lightheaded feeling.

⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it once a day at the same time. Many families use bedtime, because the sleepiness lands while you are asleep anyway.
- Swallow the extended-release tablet whole. Crushing or chewing it dumps the whole day's worth at once and is not safe.
- Do not take it with a high-fat meal, because that pushes much more of it into your system than it should.
- If a dose is missed, take it when you remember unless it is nearly time for the next one. Never take two together.
- The short-acting and long-acting versions are not the same strength, so never swap one for the other on your own.

🔧 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Some calming shows up in the **first week or two**, and the fuller effect usually takes about **6 weeks** to settle.
- The amount is raised slowly, usually no more than one step a week, so getting to the right level takes patience.
- Working well looks like fewer meltdowns, less interrupting, and easier evenings, not a child who seems switched off.
- Sleepiness is worst in the first **2 to 3 weeks** and then usually fades a lot. That is the main reason to hang in.
- Blood pressure and pulse are checked at visits, since this medicine lowers both a little by design.

♥ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Sleepiness is the most common effect and affects many people early on. Bedtime dosing solves it for most families.
- Feeling dizzy or seeing spots on standing is common. Stand up slowly and sit on the edge of the bed for a moment first.
- Dry mouth is common. Water, sugar-free gum, and normal dental care handle it without any change to the medicine.
- Headache and stomachache turn up in the first weeks and usually fade. Eating something with the dose can help.
- Some people feel flat, irritable, or a bit down. That is worth reporting, because it can mean the amount is too high.
- A slow pulse and a small drop in blood pressure are expected. Skipping breakfast or getting dehydrated makes it worse.

⚠ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Fainting, or passing out and coming to on the floor: call **911** and do not take another dose until you talk to someone.
- A pulse that feels very slow, or chest pain and trouble breathing: get seen the same day or go to the ER.
- Anyone who swallowed extra tablets, especially a small child: call Poison Control or **911** immediately.
- New or worse thoughts of hurting yourself, or a new deep low mood: call or text **988**, or call your prescriber today.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not stop this suddenly. Blood pressure and heart rate can rebound high, with headache, shakiness, and agitation.
- Alcohol, sleep aids, opioid pain medicines, and sedating allergy pills all pile onto the drowsiness. Ask first.
- Other blood pressure medicines add to the lowering effect, so tell every prescriber that you take this one.
- Some antibiotics, antifungals, and seizure medicines shift the level in either direction. Keep one full medicine list.
- Do not drive, ride a bike, or use machines until you know how sleepy this makes you, especially in the first weeks.

⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Stopping must be gradual, with the amount stepped down over days to weeks exactly as your prescriber lays out.
- The reason for the taper is rebound: blood pressure and pulse can shoot up, along with headache and jitteriness.
- If you or your child cannot keep doses down because of illness, call your prescriber. Do not just let doses lapse.
- It is not habit forming and not a controlled medicine, so refills are simpler than they are with a stimulant.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Should we take this at bedtime or in the morning, and why?
- How slowly will the amount be raised, and what do we watch for at each step?
- Are we using this on its own or added to a stimulant, and why?
- Exactly how do I taper this off if we decide to stop it?

Where this information comes from

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NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.