

Methylphenidate

Ritalin, Ritalin LA, Concerta, Metadate ER, Methylin, Daytrana, Quillivant XR, QuilliChew ER, Aptensio XR, Cotempla XR-ODT, Jornay PM, Relexxii, a stimulant medicine for attention and focus

This medicine helps you or your child hold attention, finish what you start, and pause before acting on an impulse.

WHAT IT TREATS

ADHD; also narcolepsy

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Morning; some forms twice

WHEN IT WORKS

Same day, within an hour

HABIT FORMING

Yes; a controlled medicine

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

This is a controlled medicine. Taken as prescribed and stored safely it is one of the best-studied treatments there is. Misuse - larger amounts, snorting, or injecting - can cause overdose, death, and dependence. Never share or sell it.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Methylphenidate** raises two brain chemicals that help you hold attention, sit with boredom, and stop before acting.
- It does not change who you or your child is. When it fits, it makes it easier to be the person already in there.
- It comes in short tablets, all-day capsules, a chewable, a liquid, and a patch, so coverage can be matched to your day.
- It works the day you take it. There is no waiting weeks, and nothing builds up on days it is not taken.

② HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it in the morning with or right after breakfast. Food does not block it, and it is easier on the stomach.
- Long-acting capsules and tablets are swallowed whole. Ask your pharmacist before opening, crushing, or sprinkling any of them.
- If a second dose is part of the plan, take it early enough in the afternoon that it is not still working at bedtime.
- If a morning dose is missed and it is already afternoon, skip it. A late dose usually costs you a night of sleep.
- Store it in a locked box or somewhere only you can reach, and know how many are left. Others may want to take it.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Short-acting forms start in **30 to 60 minutes**. All-day forms come on over an hour or two and then coast.
- Working well looks like finishing tasks, fewer careless mistakes, and less blurting. It should not make anyone flat or robotic.
- Finding the right form and amount usually takes a few weeks of small changes and check-ins. That is normal, not failure.
- As the dose wears off in the late afternoon, many kids get cranky, tearful, or wound up for an hour. This is called rebound.
- In children, height and weight get plotted at least every **6 months**, because steady treatment can slow growth a little.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Appetite drops during the hours it is working. Serve a real breakfast before it kicks in and keep dinner unhurried.
- Have calorie-dense snacks ready for when hunger returns after school, like nut butter, cheese, whole milk, or a smoothie.
- Trouble falling asleep is common. Moving the dose earlier, not later, is usually the fix, so ask before changing anything.
- Headache and stomachache are common in the first week or two and usually fade. Water and food with the dose help both.
- Feeling flat, quiet, or teary often means the amount is a bit too high. Report it instead of pushing through.
- Heart rate and blood pressure go up a little for most people, so your prescriber will check them at every visit.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Chest pain, fainting, or a pounding heartbeat during exercise: stop and call **911**.
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there, or a sudden extreme mood swing: hold the next dose and call the same day.
- An erection that will not go down, or fingers and toes turning white, blue, and numb: get seen that day.
- New or worse thoughts of hurting yourself: call or text **988** now, or go to the ER if you do not feel safe.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not drink alcohol while it is working. It hides how impaired you are and makes your heart work harder at the same time.
- Skip extra caffeine, energy drinks, and decongestant cold pills. They stack on top and cause jitters and a racing heart.
- Tell every prescriber you take this, hold it before elective surgery, and never take it within **14 days** of an MAOI.
- Sharing or selling this medicine puts the other person in real danger, and it is also a crime. Keep it locked and counted.
- Tell your prescriber if you are pregnant, planning to be, or breastfeeding so you can weigh the choice together.

⏸️ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- No taper is needed, but stopping suddenly after long steady use can bring a few days of tiredness, big appetite, and low mood.
- Some families take planned breaks on weekends or over the summer. Decide that with your prescriber rather than on your own.
- Because this is a controlled medicine, refills are not automatic. Ask for the next prescription about a **week** ahead.
- If it seems to have stopped working, call your prescriber instead of taking extra. Sleep, timing, or the form may need a change.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How many hours should this cover, and what should the evening look like?
- What do we do if appetite drops off or growth starts to slow down?
- How do refills work, and what happens if a prescription is lost or stolen?
- Should a teacher rating scale be part of how we judge whether this works?

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.