

# Strattera vs. Adderall, which is better for ADHD?

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## What is ADHD?

ADHD is a condition that makes it hard for a person to focus, stay still, or control their impulses. It is usually caught in children, but can also be diagnosed later in life. ADHD can't be cured, but the symptoms can be treated with medications. The three main characteristics of ADHD are:

- Impulsivity (speaking out of turn, interrupting others)
- Hyperactivity (such as trouble staying still)
- Inattention (spacing out, daydreaming, not listening actively)

A person can either fall under “inattentive” category or mostly “hyperactive-impulsive” category. It is also possible to have a combination of both. A child has to show at least 6 of these behaviors in at least 2 different places (for example, home and school). These types of behaviors also have to occur for 6 months or longer. An adult only needs to show 5 symptoms to be diagnosed. The symptoms and types of behaviors of ADHD are summarized below.

Inattention	Hyperactivity-Impulsivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Difficulty paying attention</li><li>● Does not appear to listen</li><li>● Difficulty with organization</li><li>● Losing things</li><li>● Being distracted easily</li><li>● Difficulty following through on instructions</li><li>● Forgetful in daily activities</li><li>● Avoidance or dislike of tasks that require a lot of thinking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Fidgeting with hands or feet or squirming in chair</li><li>● Difficulty remaining seated</li><li>● Difficulty doing activities quietly</li><li>● Talking excessively</li><li>● Acting as if driven by a motor</li><li>● Blurting out answers before questions have been completed</li><li>● Difficulty waiting or taking turns</li><li>● Interrupting or intruding upon others</li></ul>

## Why treat ADHD?

ADHD can make a person fall behind in school, or get in trouble at work. ADHD can also hurt personal relationships. This includes getting into trouble for inappropriate behavior with other students or teachers. ADHD could also result in personal harm such as car accidents or abusing substances because of the untreated condition.

## What is the most effective treatment option for ADHD?

Stimulants are the best treatment option for ADHD. Stimulants are a class of drugs that improve focus and attention. They work by releasing chemicals in the brain, such as norepinephrine and dopamine. Norepinephrine helps to block out noise in the environment and stop inappropriate behavior. Dopamine improves attention and focus needed to complete day-to-day tasks. Stimulants work well, but they can also cause unwanted side effects, such as:

- Increase in heart rate and blood pressure
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling nervous
- Trouble sleeping
- Possible psychosis (losing touch with reality)

If abused or misused, stimulants can also lead to heart disease, heart attacks, or sudden death.

## What is Adderall and what is Strattera?

Adderall is a stimulant that treats ADHD. It is usually the first option for treating ADHD. Strattera is another drug that treats ADHD, but it is not a stimulant. Strattera is used as a second option if Adderall can't be used. Strattera is given to those who have heart problems that are worsened by drugs like Adderall. It is also given to those who had bad side effects while taking Adderall. Strattera is also given to those who have a current or past history of drug abuse.

Brand Name	Generic Name	Classification	When is it preferred
Adderall	Amphetamine/Dextroamphetamine	Stimulant	Healthy patients Healthy heart No history of drug abuse
Strattera	Atomoxetine	Non-stimulant	Presence of heart disease, history of substance abuse, anxiety

## How often do I take Adderall and Strattera?

Adderall comes in capsules and tablets, and in different formulations, such as the extended-release capsule or the immediate-release capsule. The extended-release capsule lasts all day (up to 12 hours), dosed once daily, while the immediate-release capsule lasts about 4-6 hours (dosed twice daily). The first dose is given in the morning, so the child can benefit from its effects during school hours. If taken twice daily, the second dose is usually given 6-7 hours later. It is not given at bedtime because stimulants can cause trouble sleeping and restlessness. The beaded Adderall capsules can be swallowed whole, or opened and sprinkled onto food.

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>Dosing instructions</b>
Adderall	Tablets Immediate-release capsules	Once daily in the morning, with a 2nd dose in the afternoon, 6-7 hours later  Max dose: 40 mg/day
Adderall XR	Capsule (extended-release)	Once daily in the morning  Max dose: 30 mg/day
Strattera	Capsule	Once daily in the morning; 2nd dose may be given in afternoon or late evening  Target dose: 100 mg/day

### **Which medication works better, Adderall or Strattera?**

Both medications have different side effects associated with them, and different pros and cons. Adderall is generally preferred to Strattera because it works faster. Strattera works a lot slower, so it is not a good option if someone is looking for immediate results. Strattera can also make a person feel dizzy or tired, while Adderall can make a person feel restless, or have trouble falling asleep at night.

### **Risks associated with Adderall**

Adderall can cause upset stomach and sleep problems. It also causes a person to feel less hunger, and eat less frequently. Parents should keep track of their child's eating habits and make sure their kids are eating at meal times. Parents should also make sure that Adderall is given early in the morning so the child has less trouble falling asleep at night.

Because Adderall works so well and works really fast, it can be abused. For this reason, Adderall is not given to patients struggling with drug abuse. It is also not a good option for a person with anxiety because Adderall can make those feelings worse. It is also not a safe option in people with heart disease.

### **Risks associated with Strattera**

Strattera can also cause stomach upset and make a person feel less hungry and less willing to eat. But the tradeoff is that Strattera does not carry risk for abuse or addiction. Strattera has a warning for increased risk of suicide. Strattera can also make a person feel tired or dizzy during the day. While tiredness is not good during the day, it may be okay for a person who has trouble sleeping or who suffers from anxiety.

## **The Bottom Line**

Both Adderall and Strattera are good options for treating ADHD. The choice of what to take will depend on side effects of the two drugs and their associated risks. Adderall is a better option for those who are in good general health and need quick relief. Strattera is a better option if a person has a heart condition, or risk for abuse. The pros and cons of each medication will depend on the person's history and health. Talk to your doctor to find out what is the best option for you.