

FAQ: ADHD Medication – Treatment Options, Repeat Prescription Process, and Brand vs. Generic Prescribing

Overview: Treatment Options for ADHD

1. What treatment options are available for ADHD?

ADHD treatment typically involves medication and behavioural therapy. The most commonly prescribed medications are **stimulants** and **non-stimulants**.

- **Stimulants:** These include **Methylphenidate** (e.g., Xaggitin XL, Concerta XL, Equasym XL, Medikinet XL) and **Lisdexamfetamine** (Elvanse).
- **Non-Stimulants:** These include **Atomoxetine** (Strattera) and **Guanfacine** (Intuniv), used when stimulant medications are not effective or suitable.

In some cases, the specialist might consider prescribing both a stimulant and a non-stimulant medication together, especially if symptoms are still a challenge on the maximum dose of one medicine alone. This would always be decided carefully on a case-by-case basis and discussed fully with the family to make sure it's the right approach for the child.

Note: We understand that access to behavioural therapy can vary depending on your local NHS services, and waiting times can sometimes be long.

While you're waiting for support, there are some excellent resources offered by national ADHD charities and voluntary organisations. These include practical strategies, videos, and parenting tips that can be really helpful to try at home straight away. They offer advice on managing daily routines and improving sleep, supporting emotional regulation, using positive behaviour techniques, and handling common challenges such as homework and screen time.

We recommend exploring resources from organisations like:

- adhdandyou.co.uk
- adhdfoundation.org.uk

2. How long do ADHD medications last?

Everyone is different, and ADHD medications can last for different amounts of time depending on the person. Things like age, body weight, and how someone responds to the medicine can all play a part. That said, it's helpful to know roughly how long different types of medication usually work, just to help plan for school, homework, or daily routines.

Here's a general guide:

- **Stimulant Capsules** (e.g., Equasym XL, Medikinet XL, Meflynate XL): Last **6-8 hours**, typically covering a school day.
- **Stimulant Tablets** (e.g., Xaggitin XL, Concerta XL, Matoride XL): Last **10-12 hours**, ideal for high school-aged children.

- **Non-stimulant** medications, such as **Atomoxetine** and **Guanfacine**, last **24 hours** and should be taken daily.

If you're ever unsure how long a medication should last for your child, or if the effect seems too short or too long, speak to the team, they can help guide any changes

IMPORTANT NOTE:

- All **stimulant medications** listed above are controlled drugs. This means that stricter rules, under the Misuse of Drugs Act, may apply when prescribing, dispensing and collecting prescriptions.
- Please remember: A prescription for controlled drugs is only valid for 28 days from the date written on it. If your pharmacy owes you any medication, it must be collected within those same 28 days.
- Please ensure all medications are kept in their original packaging within a locked tin/ cupboard and out of the reach of children.
- All medication must be administered by an adult and the child observed.
- Any left-over or unwanted medication should be returned to the pharmacy and not placed in wastebins or flushed down the toilet.

It is very important to look after your medicines. If there is a problem, for example you lose your prescription or medication, you must contact the service immediately so that we can notify the right people and follow appropriate procedures.

3. How can I learn more about my child's medication?

For more information about your child's medication, visit [medicinesforchildren.org.uk](https://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk). In the search bar, type in the name of your medication, such as:

- **Methylphenidate**
- **Lisdexamfetamine**
- **Atomoxetine**
- **Guanfacine**

It's important to understand that not every medication will suit every child. We are committed to working with you to find the best treatment to help your child reach their full potential. Medication is part of a holistic approach that includes emotional health, self-esteem, behavior management, and support from schools.

Repeat Prescription Process for ADHD Medication

1. How do I request a repeat prescription for my child?

To avoid running out of medication unexpectedly, please order a repeat prescription **7-10 days** before your child's medication runs out.

A) **HALTON:** You can request a repeat prescription:

- By email: bchft.halton.prescriptions@nhs.net

Rest assured, once you send us with your repeat request, you will receive an email confirming receipt.

B) **WARRINGTON:** You can request a repeat prescription by emailing us at: bchft.warrcompaed-repeatscripts@nhs.net

Rest assured, once you email us with your repeat request, you will receive an email confirming receipt of your request.

Requests are processed within **48-72 hours** (working days only – please note that we do not operate on weekends or public holidays).

2. Do I need to contact the service to check on my prescription?

No need to chase us if it's not urgent - your repeat prescription will be processed, and we'll contact you if there's any issue with your child's prescription.

Please allow time for us to review and issue it, and for the pharmacy to process the medication.

You will receive an **SMS confirmation** once your prescription is issued.

3. Why do I need to provide height, weight, blood pressure and heart rate before ADHD medication is issued?

Before we can issue any repeat ADHD medication, we must follow national guidance. This means your child's height, weight, blood pressure, and heart rate need to be checked regularly for safety.

You may be asked to:

- Provide recent readings, or
- Attend a clinic for checks.

Annual reviews are also required as a minimum when using ADHD medication. If your child's needs are more complex, reviews may be needed more often.

If checks or reviews are not up to date, we may only issue a short supply or pause the prescription until they are completed. This is to keep your child safe and ensure the medication is still appropriate.

4. What happens if I need to check if my child's medication is in stock?

To avoid delays, especially during drug shortages, we strongly recommend contacting your preferred pharmacy before requesting a repeat prescription. This will help ensure they have the specific brand in stock or can order it in time, preventing the need for prescription reissues.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Due to ongoing national drug supply issues and high service demand, we are unable to contact pharmacies on your behalf. Thank you for your understanding.

5. What is the NHS Spine and EPS system, and how does it help during medicine shortages?

During medicine shortages, we will mostly be sending your child's prescription to the NHS Spine instead of directly to your preferred pharmacy. This allows any pharmacy with stock to download the prescription, helping you access the medication more quickly.

The NHS Spine is the national digital system that connects healthcare records and prescriptions across England. When we use the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) to send a prescription to the NHS Spine, it means:

- It is securely stored and accessible by any pharmacy in England
- You are not limited to one pharmacy (you can try others with availability)
- You'll receive an SMS from us when the prescription is sent.

If your chosen pharmacy cannot supply the medication, they can return the prescription to the NHS Spine, and you can try another pharmacy without needing a new prescription.

To make sure there are no delays, please contact the pharmacy directly with your child's details (full name, date of birth, and NHS number, if known). This will help the pharmacy retrieve the prescription from the NHS Spine.

You can use the official [Find a pharmacy - NHS](#) to check local pharmacy opening hours, contact details, and location based on your postcode.

6. Should I always use the same pharmacy – my child's 'nominated pharmacy'?

Although prescriptions are being sent to the NHS Spine, we strongly recommend using the same pharmacy for your child's repeat prescriptions whenever possible. This approach offers several key benefits:

- **Familiarity:** The pharmacy will get to know your child's medication needs and history, which helps them provide better care. They will also be familiar with you as parents when picking up controlled medications, and they may offer delivery or postal services, or you can pick up the medications in person.
- **Ordering:** The pharmacy can make sure all of your child's medications are ordered ahead of time, helping avoid delays.
- **Reduced Confusion:** Using the same pharmacy means your full prescription (e.g., sleep and ADHD medications) is handled together, reducing the risk of confusion or missing medications.

- Support with Drug Shortages and Delays: Each pharmacy has different ways of ordering, and they may reach out to different suppliers to get your child's medication. By working closely with families, they can ensure prescriptions are fully completed, even when there are delays or only part of the medication is available.

We recommend sticking with one pharmacy you know and trust. This helps keep your child's medication on track and avoids delays.

This is called your child's Nominated Pharmacy – it's the one listed in their health records and where prescriptions are usually sent.

IMPORTANT NOTE: We don't recommend or choose pharmacies for you – it's completely your choice. We also don't change the nominated pharmacy on your records, if you want to update it, you can either:

- Ask your chosen pharmacy to make the change, or
- Speak to your GP to update your child's records.

7. What if I use an internet pharmacy?

Internet pharmacies (like Pharmacy2U, LloydsDirect etc.) are not walk-in pharmacies - they can only post or deliver your medication.

If you choose to use one, please be aware:

- You must tell the internet pharmacy when a prescription has been issued for your child by EPS.
- They will then retrieve the prescription from the NHS Spine, prepare the medication, and arrange for it to be delivered to your home.
- To help them find the prescription, make sure you provide your child's full name, date of birth, and NHS number.

8. What should I do if the pharmacy doesn't have enough stock of my child's medication?

This is especially important if your child's ADHD and sleep medication are on the same prescription form.

- If the pharmacy doesn't have the full supply, they may offer a part-dispense or give an "owing" note. Before agreeing to this:
- Ask when the rest of the medication will be ready - get a clear date.
- Be aware: Once the pharmacy begins dispensing, they cannot return the prescription to the NHS Spine. This means the remaining medication can't be collected from another pharmacy.
- If the pharmacy is unable to complete the prescription, you may have to wait or request a new prescription – and this may not be possible until the next due date.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some ADHD medications are usually Controlled Drugs, and the prescription is only valid for 28 days from the date it was issued. Make sure the pharmacy dispenses within this timeframe to avoid needing a new prescription.

To avoid delays, it's best to contact your chosen pharmacy first to check stock before they start dispensing.

9. What should I do if I want to restart my child's ADHD medication after a break?

Taking a break from ADHD medication- often called a "drug holiday", is a normal and recognised part of **stimulant medications (like methylphenidate or lisdexamfetamine)**, especially during school holidays or weekends. It is perfectly safe to pause and restart medication for short periods and many families do this based on what works best for their child's routine.

However, this is **not the case for non-stimulant medicines like guanfacine (Intuniv®) or atomoxetine (Strattera®)**. These medicines need to be taken every day, at the same time, to work properly. They don't work straight away like stimulant medicines and need to build up in the body over time. Stopping them suddenly can cause side effects (like changes in blood pressure, mood, or sleep) and may affect how well your child's ADHD is managed.

If your child has not taken any ADHD medication - stimulant or non-stimulant, for more than 6 months, we kindly ask that you contact our team before restarting. This allows us to carry out a clinical review and ensure the medication, dose, and plan are still suitable.

We will need to check:

- How long your child has been off treatment
- Whether a consultation is needed
- Any recent changes to your child's health
- Their current height, weight, blood pressure, and heart rate
- This review helps us follow national best practice and keeps your child safe.

If you're unsure or have any questions - please just get in touch. We're here to help and will support you with restarting treatment safely.

Supporting the Supply Issues

1. What are we doing about it?

We are following the latest guidance from NHS Cheshire & Merseyside (C&M) to manage ADHD medication supply safely and fairly across the region. This ensures that any changes made to your child's prescription are clinically appropriate and consistent.

To help minimise disruption, we are also:

- Working with manufacturers to identify ADHD medications that are currently available and reliable, so we can prescribe consistent options.

- Sending regular updates to pharmacies and encouraging them to keep us informed about local stock levels. However, please note this can vary between pharmacies.
- Reviewing our approach regularly as national shortages change, so we can keep your child's treatment as safe and uninterrupted as possible.

If we become aware of any new supply issues, we'll update families and patients as soon as possible.

2. Where can I find the latest updates?

You can find the most up-to-date local information here:

[Update on ADHD Medication Shortage - NHS Cheshire and Merseyside](#)

As of May 2025, there are ongoing **national supply issues** affecting some ADHD medications - particularly **Methylphenidate XL CAPSULES** and other commonly prescribed treatments.

These shortages may cause delays at pharmacies or make it difficult to get the full prescription. In some cases, your child may need to be considered for an alternative option.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The situation is changing regularly. We will keep this section updated with the latest information to help you plan ahead.

3. Why does it matter which brand of Methylphenidate XL my child is given?

Methylphenidate XL is a slow-release medication commonly used to treat ADHD. It comes in different brand-name and generic versions and can be in capsule or tablet form. These versions may release the medicine into the body differently.

To keep things safe and consistent for your child:

- We prescribe by brand name¹ – this means your child gets the same type of medication every time.
- When prescribed generically, the pharmacy may give a different brand each time, which can affect how well it works.
- We also consider supply issues – using specific brands helps avoid delays and ensures your child's treatment continues smoothly.

If you're ever unsure about the medication you've been given, or if the packaging or shape looks different, please contact us before starting it.

¹ The MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) [Drug Safety Alert: caution if switching between products due to differences in formulations.](#)

4. What if I prefer a specific brand of Methylphenidate XL for my child?

If you prefer a particular brand, please tell us why so we can record this in your child's notes.

Your chosen pharmacy must also contact us to confirm exactly which brand they can supply. Our prescribers will then assess whether it is clinically appropriate before issuing a prescription.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Even if the pharmacy requests a generic or specific brand, it may not always be suitable. We will only prescribe what is safe, consistent, and appropriate for your child.

If you have any questions, please contact us on the details below.

5. What happens if my child's usual medication isn't available?

If we're made aware that you're struggling to get your child's usual prescription, our clinicians may prescribe a suitable alternative. This decision is only made after reviewing your child's medical notes and past medications to make sure the alternative is safe and appropriate.

We use regional supply information to see what medications are currently in stock and available, so we can prescribe something with the best chance of ongoing supply.

You may receive an SMS letting you know that a new prescription has been issued. Don't be worried if you haven't spoken to us directly, this means we are acting quickly on your query, especially if we know you have only 7–10 days of medication left. Please feel reassured that a prescriber has reviewed your case urgently and safely.

If you have any questions or concerns, speak to your community pharmacist or contact us directly.

Additional Information and Resources

1. How can I get more information about ADHD medications?

If you're looking for trusted information about ADHD and the medications used to manage it, the following resources may help:

- **National Resources:**
 - For more detailed information about ADHD medications, we recommend visiting the following websites:
 - adhdandyou.co.uk
 - adhdfoundation.org.uk
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For Any Further Questions or Concerns:

If you have any further questions or need assistance, please contact us via:

Halton

Community Paediatrics Service
Tel: 01928 593 011
bchft.haltonpaedsadmin@nhs.net

Warrington

Community Paediatrics Service
Child Development Centre
Tel: 01925 946 773
bchft.warringtoncommunitypaediatrician@nhs.net

We know the current demand for our services is exceptionally high, and we want to reassure you that our team is working hard to provide the best support possible.

If you are experiencing difficulties or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to help and will always do our best to support you and your child.

In the meantime, we kindly ask for your continued patience and to treat our staff with kindness and respect. Thank you for your understanding.