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# The Medical Letter®

## on Drugs and Therapeutics

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### IN BRIEF

#### Alternatives to *Adderall*

The short-acting formulation of mixed amphetamine salts (*Adderall*, and generics) FDA-approved for treatment of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy is currently in short supply in the US.<sup>1</sup> Until an adequate supply is restored, patients may be looking for alternatives.

**STIMULANTS** – Stimulants are the drugs of choice for treatment of ADHD. Some patients may respond better to amphetamines than to methylphenidate, and vice versa. The choice between them should be based on individual responses and preferences.

Factors to consider in choosing a stimulant formulation include onset and duration of action, ease of administration, and cost. Long-acting formulations are appropriate for most school-age children and

adults. Short-acting formulations are sometimes used in addition to longer-acting ones to improve symptom control early in the morning or to prolong the duration of action and smooth withdrawal in the late afternoon.<sup>2</sup>

**SHORT-ACTING STIMULANT ALTERNATIVES** – Currently available short-acting stimulants that may be used as alternatives to *Adderall* include dexamethylphenidate (*Focalin*, and generics), methylphenidate (*Ritalin*, *Methylin*, and generics), and dextroamphetamine (*Zenzedi*, *ProCentra*, and generics); their onset of action occurs within 30-60 minutes and their duration of action is similar to that of *Adderall* (see Table 1).

Dosing requirements for stimulants are highly variable. They should be started at the lowest recommended dose, which can be increased every 7 days (in urgent cases every 3 days) until a substantial improvement in symptoms is achieved.

Table 1. Short-Acting Stimulants for ADHD

Drug	Some Formulations	Duration of Action	Pediatric Dosage <sup>1</sup> Initial/Maximum	Adult Dosage Initial/Maximum	Cost <sup>2</sup>
<b>Methylphenidate Stimulants</b>					
Dexamethylphenidate generic <sup>3</sup> <i>Focalin</i> (Novartis) <sup>3</sup>	2.5, 5, 10 mg tabs	5-6 h	2.5 mg bid/10 mg bid	2.5 mg bid/10 mg bid	\$12.60 39.60
Methylphenidate generic <sup>3</sup>	5, 10, 20 mg tabs and chewable tabs; 5 mg/5 mL, 10 mg/5 mL soln	3-5 h	5 mg bid/60 mg divided bid or tid	10 mg bid/60 mg divided bid or tid	15.30
<i>Ritalin</i> <sup>3</sup> (Novartis)	5, 10, 20 mg tabs				41.40
<i>Methylin Oral Solution</i> <sup>3</sup> (Shionogi)	5 mg/5 mL, 10 mg/5 mL soln				21.00
<b>Amphetamine Stimulants</b>					
Mixed amphetamine salts generic <sup>4</sup> <i>Adderall</i> <sup>4</sup> (Teva)	5, 7.5, 10, 12.5, 15, 20, 30 mg tabs	4-6 h	5 mg qAM or bid <sup>5</sup> /40 mg divided bid	5 mg bid/60 mg divided bid	12.10 268.80
Dextroamphetamines generic <sup>4</sup>	5, 10 mg tabs; 5 mg/5 mL soln	4-6 h	5 mg qAM or bid <sup>5</sup> /40 mg divided bid	5 mg bid/60 mg divided bid	31.00
<i>Zenzedi</i> <sup>4</sup> (Arbor)	2.5, 5, 7.5, 10, 15, 20, 30 mg tabs				220.60
<i>ProCentra</i> <sup>4</sup> (Independence)	5 mg/5 mL soln				253.70

1. For children ≥6 years old.  
 2. Approximate WAC for 30 days' treatment at the lowest initial pediatric dosage. WAC = wholesaler acquisition cost or manufacturer's published price to wholesalers; WAC represents a published catalogue or list price and may not represent an actual transactional price. Source: AnalySource® Monthly. October 5, 2022. Reprinted with permission by First Databank, Inc. All rights reserved. ©2022. www.fdbhealth.com/policies/drug-pricing-policy.  
 3. FDA-approved for use in patients ≥6 years old.  
 4. FDA-approved for use in patients ≥3 years old.  
 5. Initial dosage for children 3-5 years old is 2.5 mg once daily.

**LONG-ACTING MIXED-AMPHETAMINE SALTS** — Two long-acting formulations of mixed amphetamine salts are available in the US. *Adderall XR* (and generics), which contains both immediate- and delayed-release beads, has a duration of action of 10 to 12 hours, and *Mydayis*, which is formulated as capsules containing immediate-release beads and 2 variations of delayed-release beads, has a duration of action of up to 16 hours. *Mydayis* is FDA-approved only for use in patients  $\geq 13$  years old.

**OTHER ALTERNATIVES** — Many other long-acting stimulant products and nonstimulant options available for treatment of ADHD were reviewed in our Drugs for ADHD article.<sup>2</sup> ■

1. FDA. FDA announces shortage of Adderall. October 12, 2022. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3Nb891L>. Accessed October 31, 2022.
2. Drugs for ADHD. *Med Lett Drugs Ther* 2020; 62:9.

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