

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking ADHD medication?

By: Stephen Faraone, PhD

The medications used to treat ADHD reduce the symptoms of the disorder and many functional outcomes: delinquency, substance abuse, criminality, and suicidality. They can cause unwanted side effects but, for most patients, these side effects can be controlled by reducing the dose or changing medications.

The medications used to treat ADHD have many **advantages**. By reducing symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention, they help patients with ADHD to do better at school and work. They also **improve interactions** with family members and friends. Treatment with ADHD **improves motor vehicle driving skills** and **decreases accidents** of all kinds. From large medical registry studies of stimulant medications, we know that **consistent medication use reduces delinquency, substance abuse, criminality and suicidality**.

There are **two types of disadvantages** of the medications used to treat ADHD. The first type

of problem is that these medications can cause **unwanted side effects** such as **insomnia, appetite loss or nausea**. But for most patients, these **side effects can be controlled** by reducing the dose or changing medications.

The second type of problem applies to the stimulant medications, which are addictive substances. Although **taking stimulant medications as prescribed will not lead to addiction, they can be misused** in a way that leads to addiction. They **can also be diverted to others** for either substance abuse or performance enhancement. This is **especially problematic for immediate release stimulants**.

About the Author



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