PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Dexmethylphenidate

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

## Brand Names: US

Focalin; Focalin XR

### Warning

- This drug has a high risk of abuse and misuse. This can lead to a substance use disorder like addiction. Misuse or abuse of this drug can lead to overdose or death. The risk is higher with higher doses or when used in ways that are not approved like snorting or injecting it. Do not give this drug to anyone else. This drug may also be habit-forming if taken for a long time. Do not take for longer than you have been told by your doctor. Use only as you were told. Tell your doctor if you have ever abused or been addicted to any drugs or alcohol. You will be watched closely to make sure you do not misuse, abuse, or become addicted to this drug. Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets. Throw away unused or expired drugs as you have been told.

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat attention deficit problems with hyperactivity.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you or a family member have any of these health problems: Blood vessel disease, high blood pressure, heart structure problems or other heart problems, or Tourette's syndrome or tics.
- If you have any of these health problems: Glaucoma, agitation, anxiety, or overactive thyroid.
- If you have ever had a stroke.
- If you have taken certain drugs for depression or Parkinson's disease in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine, selegiline, or rasagiline. Very high blood pressure may happen.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

## What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.

- If you have been taking this drug for a long time or at high doses, it may not work as well and you may need higher doses to get the same effect. This is known as tolerance. Call your doctor if this drug stops working well. Do not take more than ordered.
- You may need to have some heart tests before starting this drug. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.
- This drug may raise the chance of seizures in some people, including people who have had seizures in the past. Talk to your doctor to see if you have a greater chance of seizures while taking this drug.
- This drug may cause high blood pressure. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of high blood pressure like severe headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Check blood pressure and heart rate as the doctor has told you.
- Limit your use of caffeine (for example, tea, coffee, cola) and chocolate. Use with this drug may cause nervousness, shakiness, and a fast heartbeat.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this drug.
- Sudden deaths have happened in people with some heart problems or heart defects. Tell your doctor if you have any heart problem or defect. Get medical help right away if you have any signs of heart problems like chest pain, abnormal heartbeat, or severe dizziness or passing out.
- If you are taking this drug and have high blood pressure, talk with your doctor before using OTC products that may raise blood pressure. These include cough or cold drugs, diet pills, stimulants, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen or naproxen, and some natural products or aids.
- New or worse behavior and mood changes like change in thinking, anger, and hallucinations have happened with this drug. Tell your doctor if you or a family member have any mental or mood problems like depression or bipolar illness, or if a family member has committed suicide. Call your doctor right away if you have hallucinations; change in the way you act; or signs of mood changes like depression, thoughts of suicide,

nervousness, emotional ups and downs, thinking that is not normal, anxiety, or lack of interest in life.

- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

## What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- A fast heartbeat.
- Joint pain.
- Purple patches on the skin or mouth.
- Change in eyesight or eye pain, swelling, or redness.
- Seizures.
- Shakiness.
- Trouble controlling body movements.
- Trouble controlling sounds, like humming, throat clearing, yelling, or making loud noises.

- Sweating a lot.
- Restlessness.
- Change in color of hands, feet, or other areas. Skin may turn pale, blue, gray, purple, or red.
- Numbness, pain, tingling, or cold feeling of the hands or feet.
- Any sores or wounds on the fingers or toes.
- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- Muscle pain or weakness, dark urine, or trouble passing urine.
- Change in sex interest.
- Call your doctor right away if you have a painful erection (hard penis) or an erection that lasts for longer than 4 hours. This may happen even when you are not having sex. If this is not treated right away, it may lead to lasting sex problems and you may not be able to have sex.
- A severe and sometimes deadly problem called serotonin syndrome may happen if you take this drug with certain other drugs. Call your doctor right away if you have agitation; change in balance; confusion; hallucinations; fever; fast or abnormal heartbeat; flushing; muscle twitching or stiffness; seizures; shivering or shaking; sweating a lot; severe diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up; or severe headache.

## What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Dizziness or headache.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Stomach pain or heartburn.
- Weight loss.

- Decreased appetite.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Dry mouth.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Throat pain.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

## How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### All products:

- Take with or without food.

### Tablets:

- If you take this drug twice daily, take the second dose at least 4 hours after the first dose unless your doctor has told you otherwise. Do not take this drug too late in the day. It may be harder to go to sleep if you take this drug too late in the day.

### Extended-release capsules:

- If taken with food, this drug may take longer to work.
- Take this drug early in the day to prevent sleep problems.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew or crush.

- If you cannot swallow this drug whole, you may sprinkle the contents on applesauce. If you do this, swallow the mixture right away without chewing.

## What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

## How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Store this drug in a safe place where children cannot see or reach it, and where other people cannot get to it. A locked box or area may help keep this drug safe. Keep all drugs away from pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center

or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

## Last Reviewed Date

2023-10-25

## Copyright

© 2024 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Dexmethylphenidate - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center