

## Dexamfetamine (say: decks-am-feta-mean)

### What is dexamfetamine used for?

- Dexamfetamine (also known as dexamphetamine or by its trade name Amfexa®) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and narcolepsy
- It is made as tablets.

- ☞ For ADHD, about 2 in 3 (60%) of people's symptoms improve with dexamphetamine
- ☞ If that doesn't work or it has too many side effects, then switching to another stimulant means about half of those people get better (total of about 75%, or 3 in 4 people)
- ☞ There are other options after that e.g. other medicines and therapies.

### What is the usual dose of dexamfetamine?

- The usual dose of dexamfetamine is around 20mg a day but can be up to 40mg a day in adults.

### How should I take dexamfetamine?

- Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing
- This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.

### When should I take dexamfetamine?

- Try to take it at regular times each day
- It can be taken with or after food
- If the label says to take it once a day this is usually best at breakfast
- If more than once a day, the last dose should be no later than teatime to make sure it doesn't make it even harder to fall asleep.

### What are the alternatives to dexamfetamine?

- There are other medicine (e.g. methylphenidate, lisdexamfetamine, guanfacine, atomoxetine), talking therapies and treatments for ADHD.

- ☞ See our "Handy chart" for ADHD to help you compare the medicines available and how long to take them
- ☞ This will help you talk to your prescriber, nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

### How long will dexamfetamine take to work?

- It usually starts to work within a few hours of a dose.

### How long will I need to keep taking it for?

- Probably for several years but it should be reviewed at least once a year by your specialist.

### Is dexamfetamine addictive and can I stop taking it suddenly?

- Dexamfetamine is a stimulant drug and it is possible that it can be addictive because it can be taken for its stimulant effect
- At smaller doses, it can probably be stopped suddenly
- At higher doses, it is possible that 'withdrawal' effects might be seen. These would include extreme tiredness, rebound overactivity, increased appetite and depression
- If this happens starting dexamfetamine again would get rid of these effects
- When the time comes, you should come off it by a gradual drop in the dose over several weeks
- It normally works out much better if stopping in a planned way at a time when your stress levels are lower, rather than e.g. around life events
- Discuss this with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist

*See our handy fact sheet on 'Coming off Medicines'*  
The evidence shows that dexamfetamine will not cause someone to take illicit drugs when they are older. In fact the opposite appears to be true because children will not try to self-medicate with illicit drugs to help their symptoms.

### What should I do if I forget to take a dose of dexamfetamine at the right time?

- Start again as soon as you remember unless it is nearly time for your next dose then take the next dose as normal
- Do not try to catch up by taking two or more doses at once as you may get more side-effects.

If you often have problems remembering your doses (as many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs, boxes and devices that can be used to help you remember.

### Can I drink alcohol while I am taking dexamfetamine?

- You should have no extra problems with dexamfetamine and alcohol in moderation.

### Will it affect my other medication?

Dexamfetamine has a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:

- Dexamfetamine can increase the effect of phenytoin and tricyclics (e.g. lofepramine)
- There is no problem with the 'Contraceptive Pill'.

Please see the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) for the full possible list. Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

### Will I need any blood or other tests if I am taking dexamfetamine?

- You should not need any blood tests but you might need your heart checked before starting dexamfetamine.

### What about getting pregnant?

- Discuss this with your health professional - there are leaflets that can help give you the information you need to make a choice
- Usually people gradually reduce their dose before trying to get pregnant

- If you find yourself pregnant unexpectedly see your health professional as soon as possible.

### Can I drive or cycle while I am taking it?

- You may feel a bit light-headed at first
- Until you know that dexamfetamine is not affecting you, you should not cycle, drive or operate machines. You should be careful as it may affect your reaction times.

If you have ADHD, dexamfetamine can help you concentrate and so you may actually be *less* likely to have an accident, but **only** if you take it regularly.  
(for more details go to [www.gov.uk/adhd-and-driving](http://www.gov.uk/adhd-and-driving))  
In the UK you are legal to drive as long as you take methylphenidate as prescribed by a prescriber and you are sure that it doesn't harm your driving

### What sort of side-effects might I get if I am taking dexamfetamine?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You must also see the maker's Patient Information Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting slower may help. If you think you might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your prescriber, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>VERY COMMON</b> ( <i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
Insomnia	Not being able to fall asleep at night	Discuss this with your doctor. You may be able to change the time of your dose or doses. Make sure your last dose is before teatime, or even earlier. Some people find melatonin helps.
Anorexia	Loss of weight, not feeling hungry.	If this is a problem, ask to see a pharmacist or dietician for advice. It normally wears off after a few weeks.
<b>COMMON</b> ( <i>fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Nausea and vomiting	Feeling sick and being sick. Abdominal pain	If it is bad, contact your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose. Taking it after food may help. It should wear off after a few weeks.
Nervousness	Feeling more anxious or nervous	This should wear off. If not, mention it to your doctor next time you meet.
Nasopharyngitis	Cough, sore nose and throat	This should wear off but see your doctor if it does not wear off.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint	Do not stand up too quickly. Try and lie down when you feel it coming on. Do not drive.
Tachycardia	Fast heart beat	This usually wears off but can mean the dose is a bit too high. Ask your doctor about this.
<b>Tell your prescriber if you get this side effect</b>		
Change in mood	Being aggressive, depressed, hostile and perhaps suicidal thinking.	It is more likely to occur after starting, a dose increase, or overdose. See your prescriber straight away if you have thoughts of harming yourself.

**The small print:** This leaflet is to help you understand more about your medicine. You must also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. The 'Handy charts' will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions.

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