

# Stimulant Education: Patient Education Handout

## What are Stimulants?

Stimulants are a class of drugs that boost brain activity, increase alertness, attention, and energy. They are commonly prescribed to treat conditions like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Narcolepsy.

## Common Stimulants

- Amphetamine
- Dextroamphetamine
- Methylphenidate
- Dexmethylphenidate
- Lisdexamfetamine

## Side Effects

While stimulants can be very effective, they also have potential side effects:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Loss of appetite
- Increased heart rate
- Elevated blood pressure
- Nervousness or restlessness
- Dry mouth
- Constipation

## How to Take Stimulants

- **Follow Instructions:** Always take the medication exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider. Don't adjust the dose unless your healthcare provider tells you to do so.
- **Timing:** Stimulants are often taken in the morning to minimize sleep problems. If a second dose is needed, it is usually given in the afternoon or early evening.

- **Food and Drink:** Some stimulants should be taken with food to avoid stomach upset. Be cautious about caffeinated beverages, as they may increase side effects.
- **Swallowing Tablets:** Never chew, crush, or break stimulant tablets unless instructed by your healthcare provider. Some stimulants are designed to be released slowly into your body (extended-release).
- **Acidic Foods and Drinks:** Acidic foods and beverages such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, and vinegar can decrease the absorption of certain stimulant medications, reducing their effectiveness.
  - **Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid):** High doses of Vitamin C can also decrease the absorption of stimulant medications, and should not be taken at the same time as your medication.
- **Increased Risk of Alcohol Poisoning:** Stimulants can mask the effects of alcohol, making it difficult for you to judge your level of intoxication. This can lead to drinking more alcohol than your body can handle, potentially resulting in alcohol poisoning

## When to Seek Help

If you experience any of the following, seek immediate medical attention or call 911:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Severe anxiety or panic
- Any signs of misuse (increasing dose without consultation, taking the drug despite negative consequences, etc.)

## General Guidelines

- **Communication:** Regularly report to your doctor about the effects of the medication.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Ensure you maintain a balanced diet, regular exercise, and enough sleep.
- Remember, **the goal of medication is to improve your quality of life**. If you have any concerns about your medication, please speak to your healthcare provider. Your health and well-being are our top priority!