

Pros & Cons Of

Stimulant Medication for ADHD

Note: This document is provided to discuss the pharmacological benefits of supporting ADHD as part of informed consent and psychoeducation before an appointment. This list is a non-comprehensive list and designed as a starting point for discussions. It is crucial that ADHDers and their families are at the center of decision making, as appropriate to cognitive abilities. Other options such as non-stimulants and behavioural supports should also be considered. The type of medication proceeded with will be discussed by your treating professional.

Pros

NICE Review recommends pharmacological treatment as most efficacious in supporting core ADHD traits. Stimulant medication can increase attention, reduce fidgeting, and even correct time perception challenges.

Research highlights several benefits in reduction of risk-taking behaviour (e.g. fewer rates of teenage pregnancy, motor vehicle accidents, substance use disorders, addiction, unintentional injuries). *Worth noting that ADHD medication is associated with reduced drug addiction, rather than increased.

Associated with positive well-being, such as lower rates of long term unemployment and fewer mood challenges (e.g. depression)

Reduces cognitive load on individual to scaffold through disability. This can result in:

- increased cognitive ability to be creative, flexible and take on new skills
- increased regulation of nervous system
- development of positive self-esteem (“I CAN do this!”)

Considerations

Stimulant medication may impact appetite, and therefore growth. This can be mitigated with ongoing monitoring by a doctor.

May have impact on sleep cycles and require additional support around this. (e.g. melatonin)

Trial-and-error approach to medication may mean enduring side effects (e.g. increased aggression, lethargy, anxiety) of inappropriate medication until the right medication for the individual is achieved.

Due to impact on heart rate and blood pressure, risk lies in increased incidence of cardiovascular diseases.

Co-occurring conditions (e.g. Tourette’s, OCD) and other medication interactions. Whilst not overall contra-indicated, worsening symptomology have been found in individual cases.