**What is Adderall**

Adderall is the brand name of a medication that is categorized as a central nervous system stimulant. It is a combination of amphetamine and dextroamphetamine. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has classified Adderall as a schedule II controlled substance. This means that they have determined that while Adderall is legal and beneficial in certain circumstances, it has a significant potential for abuse.

**How Does Adderall Work?**

Adderall binds to areas in the brain called norepinephrine and dopamine receptors, and epinephrine receptors in the adrenal gland. This causes an increase in ‘happy/feel-good’ chemicals in the brain. These feel-good chemicals cause euphoria and also generally improve a person’s concentration.

**Intended Use**

Adderall is a prescription medication typically prescribed to treat symptoms of hyperactivity and/or impulse control. Adderall is also used for people with Narcolepsy. Adderall is intended to be taken orally. Many people who abuse Adderall end up crushing it and snorting it, or even crushing it up, then adding water to it and injecting it.

**Where Do People Get It**?

Adderall users can get the medication in several ways. They can get it from doctors who prescribe it to them, they can buy it from other people who have a prescription, and they can steal it from friends/family members who have it around. A significant problem with Adderall abuse is doctor shopping – when a person goes to multiple doctors to obtain more medication than they need. Some people may tell doctors they have symptoms that don’t exist in order to obtain the drug.

**Signs of Adderall Abuse/Adderall Dependence**

Many people consider Adderall to be a safe drug because a doctor prescribes it. **This is not always true, though. Many medications that doctors prescribe can be addictive and dangerous, especially if taken improperly. Adderall clearly fits this category and can be very harmful.**

The following are some of the most common signs of Adderall abuse and Adderall dependence:

- Lying about symptoms to get a doctor to prescribe the medication

- Having multiple doctors prescribe Adderall so the user has more than they need

- Taking too much at a time/running out before the refill

- Taking other drugs to help fall asleep at night because Adderall is causing insomnia

- Buying it illegally on the streets

- Stealing it from friends or family

- Missing school/work/family obligations because of drug use – e.g., missing an obligation because the user was busy buying or using Adderall

- Increased tolerance - needing more of it to get the desired effect

- Taking it in ways other than prescribed – snorting it or injecting it

- Mixing it with alcohol/other drugs

- Lying to friends/family/therapist about Adderall use

Anyone who is engaging in the above behaviors and is worried about their drug use should immediately contact a medical/addiction professional.

**Negative Consequences of Adderall Abuse**

When Adderall is appropriately used, it can be a very safe and beneficial medication. When it is abused, however, it can cause severe side effects.

**Physical Side Effects**

- Increased heart rate

- Heart palpitations

- Increased blood pressure

- Malnutrition

- Rapid weight loss

- Dilated pupils

- Dizziness

- Nausea

- Insomnia

- Dry mouth

- Headaches

- Restlessness

- Tremors

- Blurred vision

- Impotence

- Difficulty having an orgasm

- Constipation

- Diarrhea

- For users who snort Adderall – the destruction of nasal and sinus cavities

- Snorting can also make other negative physical consequences more intense, such as a faster and more irregular heartbeat

- For people who inject Adderall – overdose is much more likely in this scenario than by taking it orally.

- IV users are also at risk of infections and abscesses on the skin

- Additionally, if a user is injecting but isn’t using clean needles, they are at risk of contracting certain diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis.

**Cognitive/Behavioral Side Effects of Adderall Abuse**

- Mood swings

- Irritability

- Depression

- Lack of motivation

- Paranoia

- Hallucinations

- Panic attacks

- Overly talkative

- Aggression

Not everyone will experience all of these symptoms, but these are some of the most common side effects.

**Withdrawal Symptoms**

Adderall does not have severe withdrawal symptoms like opiates, alcohol, or benzodiazepines, but people who have been abusing Adderall will feel some unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Some of the most common ones include:

- Depression

- Irritability

- Insomnia

- Nausea/Stomach Cramping

The withdrawal symptoms typically don’t last longer than a few days, though it can vary. A person who has been abusing Adderall for an extended period of time may experience more intense withdrawal symptoms, and they may last longer. Before stopping, speak to a doctor to come up with a safe plan.

**Overdose and Fatality Rates**

If a person takes too much Adderall, they can overdose, and death can occur. Because Adderall can cause an increase in heart rate as well as irregular heartbeat and heart palpations, taking too much Adderall can lead to a fatal heart attack.

**Signs Of An Overdose**

- Confusion

- Vomiting

- Rapid breathing

- Hallucinations

- Panic

- Aggression

- High fever

- Tremors

- Hypertension

- Heart attack

In extreme cases, Adderall overdose can lead to death.

**What To Do In Case Of An Overdose**

If you suspect that you or someone you are with is suffering from an Adderall overdose, call 911 and get help immediately. Understandably, people might worry about the legal consequences of calling 911 when someone is overdosing, but they need help immediately, or they could die.

While waiting for emergency responders,, try to find out some important information from the person who may be overdosing.

For example:

- How much did they take?

- How did they take it – oral, snorting, or injecting?

- Have they had any other drugs/medications? When?

- Have they had any alcoholic beverages? When and how much?

- Are they allergic to any other medications?

- Any heart issues in the past?

- History of addiction or drug abuse?

- History of Adderall abuse?

- How many days in a row have they taken Adderall? How much?

- Any other information they can provide about their general health.

All of these things will be very important to tell emergency responders to make sure the person gets the appropriate help as quickly as possible.

If you are overdosing on Adderall and get to an emergency room, they will assess and determine what treatment is necessary. Sometimes they will use activated charcoal to help absorb the medication and alleviate the symptoms of overdose. The doctor may also decide to pump your stomach to remove any remaining medication from your body. If you are agitated, aggressive, or acting uncontrollably, the hospital may also administer something to calm you down – most likely, a benzodiazepine.

**Who Is Most Commonly Abusing Adderall?**

**High School and College Students**

Adderall abuse is prevalent among high school and college students in particular. It is sometimes called the study drug. For people who don’t need Adderall, it gives them a lot of energy and allows them to stay up for longer periods of time. Many high school and college students take Adderall to study for exams or to write papers because they believe it helps them focus. It will provide them with energy and allow them to stay awake longer in order to study.

College students also use Adderall so they can stay awake and party longer when they are drinking alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant and tends to make people feel tired, but Adderall will counteract that and allow them to stay up later and party.

According to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH](https://archives.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/5-myths-about-adhd-drugs)), Adderall does NOT help people learn better or make them smarter. Many high school and college students take Adderall because they think it helps them study and makes them more intelligent. While it may help them feel more focused in the moment, there’s no correlation between higher GPAs and Adderall use. Research actually shows that students who abuse Adderall and other prescription actually have lower GPAs.

**Young Professionals**

Like high school and college students, many young professionals use Adderall as an aid to stay awake longer to work harder.

**New Parents**

Adderall abuse is also common among new parents. Many new parents are absolutely exhausted, and they believe that taking Adderall may give them more energy to take care of their children, as well as any other work they have to get done.

**Treatment**

If you or someone you know is struggling with Adderall abuse, there is help available. Inpatient treatment is an excellent option for someone who needs help quitting. At an inpatient treatment facility, there will be doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals who are educated on addiction and can help you on your path to recovery. Adderall abuse should be taken seriously, and anyone struggling should seek treatment as soon as possible. Many people who abuse Adderall will end up progressing to using cocaine and/or methamphetamines because of the similar but more intense high from those drugs. It’s never too soon to get help.