

LIMITS AND BENEFITS OF MEDICATION

A major obstacle to treatment for hyperactivity and attention deficits is the refusal of people or a key figure in their lives (parent, teacher, or spouse) to accept the diagnosis. They may think that labels of ADHD and ADD are excuses for laziness, the wrong values, or not trying hard enough. Even if this hurdle is passed, there may be resistance to the use of drugs. Making the decision to take medication and measuring its effectiveness stands a much better chance with a full understanding of its limits and benefits:

Limits and Benefits	
Medication Can Help	Medication Does Not Help
<p>Academic and Job Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quiz and test scores. • Improve visual memory and handwriting.* • Increase accuracy of work. • Increase amount of work completed. • Decrease frustration. • Increase task orientation and attention span. <p>Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve compliance to rules. • Increase delay of gratification. • Increase effectiveness of rewards. • Improve responsiveness to punishment. • Decrease overall activity level. • Increase ability to sit still longer. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase effective use of time. • Decrease distractibility. <p>Social Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased aggression. • Decrease impulsivity and disruptiveness. • Decrease negativity and reactivity. • Improve ability to “fit in.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve achievement test scores.* • Improve comprehension.* • Replace core skills missed in the past. • Change defeatist attitudes. • Correct learning disabilities (but may improve attention for special instruction). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply the will to conform or comply. • Motivate people to attain goals. • Teach decision-making skills. • Teach where to place attention. • Teach how to relax. • Improve sleep. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach organization and graceful transitions. • Improve short-term memory.* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach conversation and relating skills. • Improve self-esteem or confidence. • Teach anger control. • Reduce stigma of taking medication.

Adapted from *Beyond Ritalin* by Stephen Garber, Marianne D. Garber, and Robyn F. Spizman (Harper Perennial, 1994). Starred items are not true in all cases.

SELF-MONITORING

In mild cases, self-monitoring may eliminate the need for medication; with more difficult problems, it can pick up where medication leaves off. Self-ratings of behavior can be compared with that of a buddy or coach who has good organizational and social skills and is capable of being objective and positive. In turn, people with ADD can rate buddies who serve as models for appropriate behavior. Learning internal dialogues is also important—“I stayed on task”; “I did what I said I’d do.” It is best to work on one area at a time. The following charts are suggested for building routines and practicing social skill.

SELF-MONITORING CHARTS

Social Skills			
Name:	Date:	Rated by:	
Points: 2 (mostly) 1 (sometimes) 0 (rarely)	Self	Buddy	Parent/Teacher
I respected others': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal space • Mood and needs I interacted with others by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making eye contact • Using inviting greetings • Starting conversations • Appearing attentive • Using listening skills and staying on the topic I handled my emotions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing a positive attitude • Expressing distress without anger • Resolving conflicts of interest • Defusing rejection and rudeness 			

Note: self-monitoring social skills often shape behavior without rewards, but bonuses can be given.

Routine Building							
Routines (work on one at a time)	Number of Days (Minutes) in a Row Routine Was Kept						
1. Getting up on time							
2. Leaving the house on time							
3. Taking everything needed to school/work							
4. Coming home with everything needed							
5. Completing chores or errands							
6. Completing assignments							
7. Minutes stayed on task (without talking)							
8. Turning in assignments							
9. Taking medication							
10. Putting important items in proper places							
11. Closing drawers and cabinet doors							
12. Coming home on time							
13. Going to bed on time							
Bonus reward for beating each record: __ .							

Use calendars and stop watches to visually reinforce the number of days or minutes in a row the routine was kept.