

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

Psychiatric medications are any medications used to treat a mental health disorder (for example, ADHD, Depression). Medications can help to control symptoms, make other kinds of treatment more effective, and most importantly, may help to reduce the barriers to learning and enhance school and life success.

Some facts to know

Medications do not cure psychiatric disorders – Medications may not cure psychiatric disorders, but in many cases, along with other non-medication interventions (therapy, parent and teacher support), they can help a child or adolescent function despite continuing mental distress and difficulty coping effectively.

- Length of treatment depends on the individual and the disorder – Some children may only need to take medication for a set time period and then never need it again, while others may have to take medication for longer periods of time.
- Medications may not produce the same effect in everyone – Some children may respond better to one medication than another, often due to factors such as age, sex, body size, body chemistry, physical illnesses, diets and other treatments. Some may need larger doses versus smaller doses; some may have side effects, while others may have no side effects; some may experience minimal symptom relief as opposed to having complete symptom relief.
- Good reports from families and teachers – Families and teachers often report that a combination of medication and therapy have allowed their child to participate in school much like other children, along with improved functioning at home.
- Only used when benefits outweigh the risks – Medications should be used only when the anticipated benefits outweigh the risks.
- It is not unusual for children/adolescents to require changes in dosages and/or medications over time. It is important to regularly monitor the impact of medications.

Issues Impacting the Decision to Medicate

- Although many children and adolescents with mental health disorders can be very successful in life by utilizing non-medication interventions only (individual, group, or family therapy, parent and teacher support), medications may also be a factor that may help in the treatment of a mental health disorder or it may help to make these other forms of treatments more effective.
- Without proper identification and treatment, mental health disorders in childhood may have serious consequences, such as school failure, family conflicts, problems with relationships, problems developing social skills, substance abuse, delinquency, and even risk for accidental injuries and death.
- As with any intervention, a case-by-case decision-making process is necessary depending on your child's diagnosis and individual needs. The decision to medicate should be made solely by the child's parents or caregivers, and a medical professional experienced in diagnosing and treating childhood disorders.