

# Atomoxetine

Atomoxetine (Strattera) is a non-stimulant medication & antidepressant for Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Research has also identified a wide array of other benefits for atomoxetine including:

- Depression and anxiety
- Binge eating disorder
- Stimulant, cocaine, and amphetamine abuse
- Nocturnal enuresis (bed wetting)

## How it works

Atomoxetine enhances norepinephrine and may also increase dopamine, two neurotransmitters involved in anxiety, depression, attention & concentration.

Unlike other drugs approved for ADHD, atomoxetine does not have abuse potential & is not a controlled substance.

## How should I take it?

Atomoxetine can be taken once daily in the morning, or in divided doses to prevent gastrointestinal side effects.

## What if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

## How long do I need to take it?

In general, the medicine should be taken at least 6-12 months after the symptoms resolve in order to prevent the problem from returning. That gives the brain time to build up habits of stability. Some people may need to take the medication longer to prevent the return of depression, especially if they have had 3 or more episodes of depression in their life.

## What happens if I stop it?

Atomoxetine is not addictive and does not cause withdrawal symptoms.

## Side effects

Drowsiness, fatigue occurs in 4-11% of patients (particularly in children) – may take at night if atomoxetine is too sedating.

Decreased appetite, nausea, abdominal pain – taking atomoxetine in divided doses may help prevent stomach distress.

Atomoxetine may cause some sexual side effects particularly in men (4-8%) including erectile dysfunction & ejaculatory disorder. Sexual dysfunction in women may include decreased libido & abnormal orgasm.

Extremely rarely, Atomoxetine has been associated with increased heart rate & high blood pressure, liver damage, hypomania & activation of suicide ideation (short-term studies did not show an increase in the risk of suicidality with antidepressants compared to placebo beyond age 24; the average risk of suicidal ideation in patients receiving atomoxetine as 0.4%).

As you are starting the medicine, use caution when driving or performing tasks that require alertness. This should not be a problem once you have adjusted to the medicine and know how it affects you.

*Pregnancy:* Atomoxetine has not been adequately evaluated during pregnancy. It is unknown if atomoxetine secreted in breast milk.

### Overdose

Atomoxetine is relatively safe in overdose.

### Interactions

Tramadol can increase the risk of seizures in patients taking an antidepressant. Plasma concentrations of atomoxetine may be increased by some other antidepressants, including paroxetine & fluoxetine, so atomoxetine dose may need to be reduced.

The web sites below help you check for drug interactions. You should talk with us about the information you find as many drug interactions have only a mild effect:

[reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker](http://reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker)

### How to store and dispose of medication

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat, direct light and damp places.
- To safely dispose of unwanted pills: Do not pour in the toilet or sink (it will enter the

water supply). To prevent children or pets from eating it, mix unwanted pills in a bag with a little water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds or kitty litter) and throw in the trash.

### Cost and insurance coverage

Atomoxetine is available in generic form. If you are paying out-of-pocket, the lowest cost is usually found at Costco (336-970-2300; you do not need to be a member to use their pharmacy).

### Quick facts

Brands	Strattera
Dose range	Adults & children up to 70 kg): 40-100 mg/day Children (up to 70 kg): 0.5-1.2 mg/kg/day or 100 mg/day
Sizes	Capsules: 10 mg, 18 mg, 25 mg, 40 mg, 60 mg, 80 mg, 100 mg.
Release date	11/26/2002
FDA-approval	ADHD

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 4/22/22