

# Stimulants

## Information for Patients Who Lose Access to Care

### OVERVIEW

Stimulants are a class of medications that increase alertness, mental focus, and energy. They are commonly used to treat conditions such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), narcolepsy, depression, or impulsivity.<sup>1</sup>

Common stimulants are lisdexamfetamine (e.g., Vyvanse), methylphenidate (e.g., Concerta, Ritalin), amphetamines (e.g., Adderall), and certain diet aids (e.g., Didrex, Bontril).

### RISKS OF SUDDEN DISCONTINUATION

When a patient who has been treated with stimulants suddenly stops taking their medication or takes less than they normally do, the patient may experience withdrawal symptoms, including<sup>2</sup>:

- Insomnia or severe fatigue
- Feelings of depression, anxiety, or inability to feel pleasure
- Paranoia
- Cravings associated with specific cues such as objects, people, or other substances
- Hypersexuality and/or impaired sexual functioning

Patients who lose access to their provider are encouraged to re-establish care as soon as possible. Find tips on how to re-establish care [here](#).

**In the case of a medical emergency, call 911 or go to a local Emergency Room immediately.**

<sup>1</sup> Prescription Stimulants DrugFacts | NIDA

<sup>2</sup> Treatment of Stimulant Use Disorder - SAMHSA

<sup>3</sup> Fentanyl Facts - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>4</sup> Naloxone Drug Facts | National Institute on Drug Abuse



Pennsylvania  
Department of Health

### DANGERS OF COUNTERFEIT STIMULANTS

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When a patient suddenly loses access to their medication, they may feel they have no other option but to turn to other sources to avoid withdrawal. There are serious risks associated with taking stimulants from sources that do not require a prescription. These sources may provide counterfeit (fake) pills.

Unknown to a consumer, counterfeit (fake) pills may contain illicit ingredients such as fentanyl. Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is like morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent.<sup>3</sup> Fentanyl is a major contributor to overdose.<sup>3</sup>

### RESOURCES

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- Detoxification, or detox programs help patients safely manage the withdrawal process. To access these services, patients will first complete an assessment to determine the appropriate level of care. To access these services, you can do one of the following:
    - Call the number on the back of your health insurance card.
    - Visit [treatmentatlas.org](https://treatmentatlas.org): ATLAS is an online search tool for patients who may need withdrawal management services or substance use disorder treatment.
    - Call the [Pennsylvania Get Help Now Helpline](https://www.gethelpnow.org) (available 24/7): **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**.
  - Naloxone is an easy-to-use, life-saving medication that reverses an opioid overdose by blocking the effects of opioids such as fentanyl, which could be present in fake pills. While naloxone cannot reverse the effects of a stimulant, a person who takes medications provided by someone other than their healthcare provider is at risk of an opioid overdose and should obtain naloxone.<sup>4</sup>
    - The Standing Order for naloxone allows anyone to get naloxone without a prescription from their local pharmacy. [Learn more](#).
    - Naloxone is available at no-cost through the mail, visit: [nextdistro.org/pennsylvania](https://nextdistro.org/pennsylvania).
  - The **National Resource Center on ADHD** provides resources and information on how to help adults and youth manage the symptoms and treatment of ADHD. Visit [chadd.org](https://chadd.org).
  - The **National Suicide Crisis Lifeline** provides 24/7 free and private support to anyone. Call by dialing 988 or text “HOME” to 741741 or visit [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).
  - The [Patient Advocacy Program](#) is a resource coordinator for patients prescribed controlled substance medications who lose access to care. Call **844-377-7367** (Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM) or email [ra-dh-advocacy@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dh-advocacy@pa.gov).
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