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Atomoxetine for ADHD (Strattera, Atomaid)

Atomoxetine is used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Common side-effects are lack of appetite and feeling sleepy.

During this treatment you will be invited for regular check-ups. It is important that you keep these appointments.

About atomoxetine

Type of medicine	A non-stimulant medicine
Used for	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children aged over 6 years, young people and adults
Also called	Strattera®; Atomaid®
Available as	Capsules and oral liquid medicine

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a fairly common condition that affects a person's behaviour. People with ADHD show persistent restlessness, impulsiveness and/or inattention. You will be given help to understand your emotions and behaviours (or those of your child), but where this is insufficient, medicines such as atomoxetine can be prescribed.

Atomoxetine increases the amount of a natural chemical called noradrenaline (norepinephrine) in the brain. This increases attention and decreases hyperactivity in people with ADHD. It will initially be prescribed by a specialist doctor. It is not suitable for children under the age of 6 years.

ADHD is usually diagnosed in childhood, but it can continue into adulthood. This leaflet is written as a source of information for parents or carers of children who have been prescribed atomoxetine, and also for young people and adults who are taking it themselves.

Before taking atomoxetine

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you (or a child in your care) start taking atomoxetine it is important that your doctor knows:

- If it is for a young person who could be pregnant.
- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding.
- If you (or your child) have high or low blood pressure.
- If you (or your child) have a fast or unusual heartbeat.
- If you (or your child) have any liver, heart, or blood vessel problems.
- If you (or your child) have epilepsy, or have ever had a fit (seizure).
- If you (or your child) have a mental health problem – for example, psychosis or bipolar disorder.
- If you (or your child) have an eye problem called glaucoma.
- If you (or your child) have an adrenal gland tumour called phaeochromocytoma.
- If you (or your child) are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
- If you (or your child) have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.

How to take atomoxetine

- Before starting this treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. The leaflet will give you more information about atomoxetine and a full list of side-effects which may be experienced from taking it.

- Make sure the capsules are taken exactly as your doctor tells you to. Your doctor or pharmacist will tell you how many should be taken and when to take them. It is usual to take one dose each day, in the morning. Sometimes, a doctor may recommend dividing the dose into two, taking the first part of the dose in the morning and the other part late afternoon or early evening. The dose will be on the label of the pack to remind you which is right for you.
- Swallow the capsules whole with a drink of water. It is not important whether atomoxetine is taken before or after food.
- If you are giving the oral solution to a child, make sure you carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions for using the dosing syringe. Do not mix the oral solution with water or other liquids. Your child can have a drink of water or juice after swallowing the medicine.
- Try to avoid getting the oral solution in the eyes as it can cause irritation. Wash your hands after giving the medicine. If the oral solution does get into the eye, flush immediately with water and contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.
- When starting the treatment your doctor will prescribe a small dose and then gradually increase it. This allows your doctor to make sure that the dose helps your condition but avoids any unwanted symptoms.
- There are several strengths of atomoxetine capsule. You will be given a strength that fits with your doctor's recommendations. Each time you collect a new supply, check to make sure that the capsules are the strength that you are expecting.
- If you forget a dose, it should be taken as soon as you remember. If you do not remember until the following day, skip the missed dose. Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

Getting the most from this treatment

- Keep the regular appointments with your doctor. Your doctor will want to check to ensure that the treatment is helping. Your doctor will also monitor things like weight and height, and do some blood tests.

- There are treatment programmes that will be recommended for you and your child. These will provide you with strategies to improve behaviour and reduce any long-term impact.
- From time to time your doctor will assess the treatment to make sure it is still required. This may involve stopping atomoxetine for a short while.
- There is a small amount of evidence to show that a change in diet may help some people with ADHD. If you think that diet may be a factor for you or your child, discuss this with your doctor to see if speaking with a dietician might be of benefit.
- Before buying any medicines, check with your pharmacist which medicines are safe to take alongside atomoxetine.

Can atomoxetine cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with atomoxetine. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Common atomoxetine side-effects	What can I do if I (or my child) experience this?
Headache	Drink plenty of water and ask a pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headaches continue, let your doctor know
Feeling sleepy, dizzy, or tired	If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines
Feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting), tummy (abdominal) pain, indigestion	Stick to simple meals - avoid rich or spicy foods
Constipation	Eat a well-balanced diet and drink several glasses of water each day
Lack of appetite, loss of weight, changes to heart rate and pressure (your doctor will check for this), rash, mood swings, problems sleeping, dry mouth	If troublesome, speak with your doctor

In a very few people, atomoxetine has caused more serious unwanted effects. If you notice any of the following, you must let your doctor know **straightaway**:

- Abdominal pain with sickness, dark-coloured urine, yellowing of your skin or of the whites of the eyes (jaundice), and feeling generally unwell.
- Suicidal or self-harming thoughts, feeling depressed, irritated or agitated.

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

How to store atomoxetine

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you or your child. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment about any other medicines you are taking.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Strattera® 10 mg, 18 mg, 25 mg, 40 mg, 60 mg or 80 mg hard capsules](#); Eli Lilly and Company Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated January 2021.

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Strattera® 4 mg/ml Oral Solution](#); Eli Lilly and Company Ltd, electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated January 2021.
- [Manufacturer's User Manual, Strattera® 4 mg/ml Oral Solution](#); Eli Lilly and Company Ltd, electronic Medicines Compendium.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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