

There is an Adderall shortage. A psychiatrist explains what it means for kids, adults with ADHD

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A national shortage of Adderall has people with attention deficit/hyper activity disorder scrambling to find a pharmacy that can refill their

prescription.

The Food and Drug Administration confirmed the shortage, which specifically affects the immediate-release formulation, earlier this month. Teva, a major manufacturer of generic drugs, including a generic version of Adderall, is "experiencing ongoing intermittent manufacturing delays," the FDA said. Further complicating the issue: Adderall is considered a controlled substance because it contains amphetamine and dextroamphetamine, and its production is highly regulated.

Demand for Adderall and other stimulants has been increasing over recent years, continuing a decades-old debate about the risk of over-prescribing and misuse.

Anthony Rostain, chief of the department of psychiatry at Cooper Health, said that some of his patients visited multiple pharmacies before finding it in stock. "They're extremely anxious right now and quite frustrated," he said.

What is Adderall?

Adderall is a [brand name](#) for amphetamine mixed salts. The most common use of Adderall is to treat ADHD, but the [medication](#) is also used to treat narcolepsy—a sleep disorder—and depression, at times, Rostain said.

The medication comes in an immediate-release form, which works for about four hours, and extended-release, which people usually take once a day.

The shortage is specifically in the immediate-release formulation of Adderall.

What are the risks of the shortage?

The most immediate risk is disruption in daily life.

School-aged children could have trouble learning in the classroom and people of all ages could have a hard time regulating their emotions, focusing, and managing their behavior.

Discontinuing Adderall abruptly could lead to more hyperactivity and make people moody. "You don't want to run out of stuff suddenly," he said.

Rostain worries that people who run out and are under pressure, such as [college students](#), will attempt to buy the drug illegally, but he hasn't heard of that happening in this shortage.

Is Adderall the only medication for ADHD?

No.

There are multiple medications for ADHD, including different formulations of Adderall (immediate-release vs. long-acting). There is also another type of medication called methylphenidate. This drug is more commonly known as Ritalin or Concerta.

What to do if you can't refill your prescription

There are a few options.

Rostain said he advised patients to call different pharmacies to see if they have Adderall stocked. That could require an actual visit because some pharmacies might not be comfortable sharing their supply levels of

a controlled substance over the phone.

"Yes, it's a pain in the neck, but I told people to keep looking around because not every single pharmacy is out," he said.

Another option is for people to talk to their provider about potentially changing either the drug they are taking or the formulation. Some people who started with the immediate-release formulation may be able to switch to the extended-release version.

"Adderall immediate release lasts four hours," he explained. "Your ADHD doesn't."

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