

What to do—and what not to do—if you can't find ADHD drugs during shortage

March 2 2023, by Kimberly Cataudella



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A shortage in ADHD medication, like Adderall and Concerta, is making some users get creative with their treatment. But some remedies might be unsafe.

"People are having a hard time finding their medicine, so a common replacement is caffeine," said Dr. Erikka Dzirasa, a psychiatrist at Catalyst Therapeutic Services in Durham, North Carolina. "Parents will tell me, 'I'm just giving my kid Mountain Dew instead,' which really isn't a great option."

Here's what Dzirasa said about finding necessary medication during the shortage and avoiding home remedies.

Common ADHD home remedies aren't safe

Natural supplements aren't necessarily failsafe, Dzirasa stressed. You should check with your health care team before taking any kind of natural supplement, as many natural options can mess with other medications.

"Natural does not mean not harmful, and some natural supplements interact poorly with other medications," Dzirasa said.

"Maca powder can increase estrogen, for example, which might be dangerous if you're taking an oral contraceptive or using hormone replacements."

Maca powder, ginkgo and ginseng are common natural supplements many people take as stimulants, though there isn't enough evidence to demonstrate they help with ADHD.

Caffeine isn't a good enough replacement for ADHD medications like Adderall and Concerta, and Dzirasa recommends talking to a pharmacist or [health care provider](#) about alternate medications instead of resorting to caffeine.

Where to find ADHD medicine

Here's what Dzirasa recommends when your pharmacy is out of stock.

- First, let your doctor know: ADHD medication is a controlled substance, which means a doctor needs to write a script and send it to a pharmacy. Doctors don't usually know what pharmacies have in stock, so your healthcare provider likely won't know you're having trouble getting the medicine you need.
- Ask if other pharmacies carry the medication: Many pharmacies have databases that can track down medication in the area, and your pharmacist may be able to send you elsewhere to get what you need.
- See if there are other doses in stock: Your pharmacist may not have your 20 mg Adderall prescription, though they may have 5 mg or 10 mg medication in stock. Your [healthcare provider](#) and pharmacist might be able to get creative with dosing to get you the amount of medication you need.
- Find a neighborhood pharmacy: Private, family-owned pharmacies typically communicate directly with doctors more than chain pharmacies, so finding a neighborhood [pharmacy](#) near you may point you in the right direction quicker.
- Talk about alternate [medication](#): "If you feel like you've tried everything, your physician can always work with you for other options," she said.

"If someone's on Adderall, perhaps we can write a prescription for Dexedrine or Vyvanse. There are also non-stimulant medications that can sometimes be helpful in those interim periods."

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