# Know Your Non Stimulant Treatment Options for ADHD

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## Non-Stimulant Medication Options for ADHDers

Stimulant medications are widely prescribed for children and adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Recent estimates claim that between 60% and 80% of people with ADHD are prescribed stimulants. The effects work to limit the unwanted symptoms including impulsivity, poor attention, distractibility and hyperactivity. However, for some people stimulant medications are not the best option.

For some with ADHD, stimulant medications do not relieve symptoms. For others, the side effects of the medication outweigh the benefits. People on stimulants can experience side effects of weight loss, agitation and trouble sleeping.

Additionally, stimulants may not be appropriate if there is another health concern. In some cases, people with cardiac issues cannot use stimulants. Lastly, stimulant medications can be drugs of abuse. If there is an addiction history, stimulants can be risky.

There are alternatives, though. Over the years, non-stimulant medications for ADHD have emerged and many people have found benefit from these. Gaining information and becoming educated on these medications make you a better advocate for yourself or your child with ADHD.

### Available Medications

Below is a description of several prominent non-stimulant medications for ADHD, and the risks/benefits of each.

- **Strattera –** For over 10 years, Strattera has been an available option for people with ADHD and is the first medication approved to treat ADHD in adults. This medication improves attention and limits hyperactivity by increasing the amount of norepinephrine in the brain. Side effects include headache, nausea and sleepiness. In few people, Strattera can increase thoughts of suicide.

- **Clonidine and Guanfacine –** These were originally blood pressure medications that have been found helpful with ADHD especially in people that have tics, impulsivity and aggression. Previously, psychiatrists would prescribe these even though they were not approved for ADHD. Within the last 5 years, the FDA approved a long acting clonidine (Kapvay) and a long acting guanfacine (Intuniv) for use in children and teenagers with ADHD. Unlike stimulants, these medications take about a month to show benefit. Risks include low blood pressure and heart rate. Additionally, the newness of these brand-name medications makes them more expensive then the generics.
- **Wellbutrin –** This is a type of antidepressant that has also shown to be effective for ADHD in adults. A psychiatrist may prescribe Wellbutrin if you have symptoms of depression as well as ADHD. It has a chemical structure that is similar to amphetamine without risk for abuse. Side effects for some include anxiety and seizures.
- **Others –** At times, your prescriber may recommend other medications to help with ADHD that are

primarily used for depression or anxiety. These can be helpful because your ADHD symptoms may be triggering symptoms of depression and anxiety. Also, your depression and anxiety could be a factor in making your ADHD symptoms worse. These will likely be an addition to another ADHD treatment rather than the only treatment. Be sure to ask questions about the efficacy and risks of taking a medication that is not meant specifically for ADHD.

**Conclusion**

Like other mental health conditions, there is no one-size-fits-all treatment for ADHD. The good news is that many options exist for treatment. If you have found a lack of success with stimulants, you didn't like the side effects, or there is another issue making them a poor fit, ask your prescriber about non-stimulant options. One might be the fit you were looking for.