



## Medication for Mental Health Issues

**Occasionally the children will be prescribed medications to help them with the emotional issues they are facing. These medications work on brain chemicals that help balance emotions and thought patterns.**

Medications can be used for:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Severe mood swings
- ADHD
- Schizophrenia
- And more...

There are many medications that can help with these issues, and some work better for a person than another. Sometimes you need to be persistent to find the medication that works best for the child. Work with the psychiatrist to find the medication and dose that is most effective. Do not make changes or stop the medication without approval from the psychiatrist.

- Some medications work quickly and you will see improvement in days, but others may work more slowly. The child may need to take a medication for several weeks before seeing an improvement. If the child does not feel better within a few weeks, talk to the doctor.
- Medication may be a short term aid that only needs to be taken for a few months, or in some cases medication may be long term or even life-long.
- For many medications, the child will start at a low dose and slowly increase dosages to the correct level.

These medications must be taken consistently for them to be effective. Do not skip or miss a dose. The child must stay on the medication to receive its full benefits.

It is not uncommon for a person to feel so much better on the medication that they think they are “cured” and no longer need the medication - this is not true. These types of medications only work when they are taken consistently and according to the doctor’s instructions.

**Without the medication, the old patterns of feelings and behaviors will likely return.**

Medication should never be stopped without approval from the psychiatrist. Once stabilized on the medication, the child should be re-evaluated by the psychiatrist at least every 6 months.

Often, when medication is discontinued under direction of the psychiatrist, the medication will be stopped gradually – the child needs to wean off of these medications while his/her brain chemicals get used to the change.

Many medications used to treat depression and ADHD include a serious warning for children and teens: studies have shown that children and teens on these medications are more likely to think about killing themselves than children/teens who are not on the medications. Parents should ask the doctor about potential side effects and contact the doctor if they see any concerning behaviors.

**When medication is prescribed, it is beneficial to participate in counseling as well.**

Medicines are usually more effective when combined with counseling. In some cases, medications can reduce symptoms so that counseling can be more effective. Many psychiatrists work in partnership with psychologist or other counselors who will provide the counseling to augment the medication.

However, sometimes when people are stabilized on medication and take the medication consistently, they will function so much better that they no longer need higher level counseling. At some point they learn to function with the help of the medication along with what they learned in their counseling sessions. If at any time the parent believes the child needs more support, the child should return to a more advanced level of counseling.