



Stimulant-placebo trials – information for parents/carers

Treatment with medication may be considered for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The commonest type of medication used is stimulants. There are 2 types of stimulants called Dexamphetamine and Methylphenidate. Methylphenidate is often called Ritalin® which is one of the brand names. Your doctor has decided that your child may benefit from one of these medications and has decided to do a trial. This is to make sure that your child really does benefit from the medication. Although there are long acting tablets of methylphenidate eg Ritalin LA® and Concerta®, stimulant-placebo trials are conducted using the short acting tablets.

How the trial works:

- Your child will take different tablets in 2 week blocks. Some blocks will be the active medication and others will be a harmless sugar tablet (usually called a placebo).
- The doctor will decide for how long the trial will last (eg 4 two week blocks).
- Neither you nor the doctor will know when your child is taking the active tablets or the placebo tablets. The pharmacy will do this in random order and then send the doctor this information.
- You will get a prescription for the hospital pharmacy which may take up to one week to be processed (generally made up on Thursdays each week for collection on Fridays).
- The doctor will give you questionnaires for both home and school to be completed at the end of each 2 week block.
- Remember that each dose of the medication will only have an effect for about 4 hours and the questionnaires should only be about your child's behaviour while the medication would be having an effect. (For example: if your child took the medication at 8am, you should only look at the behaviour until midday.)
- The doctor will put together the results on the questionnaires with which blocks your child was on the active medication and which blocks s/he was on the placebo and decide whether the medication did make a significant difference.

Make sure the doctor has talked to you about the possible side effects of the medication.

If you have any questions, please contact your doctor.