



## WILL MEDICATION HELP?

There is no medication, either a prescription or over the counter product, which will cure Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). However, some medications may help relieve some of the co-occurring conditions associated with ASD, such as anxiety, seizures, or self-injury. Additionally, medication may help your child focus or feel more calm so he or she can benefit from other treatments, such as behavioral and educational interventions.

Deciding whether or not to try medication is a personal one. Sometimes, even parents who are wary of giving their child medication may ultimately decide to try one when their child's symptoms become overwhelming to the child and the family. Trying medication does not mean that you or your child's therapists and doctors have failed in helping your child. ASD is a medical condition, and sometimes a medication can help to improve its symptoms.

There is limited understanding of how medications work in individuals on the autism spectrum. One reason for this is that ASD symptoms and co-occurring difficulties vary so widely across individuals on the autism spectrum. Additionally, there are few scientific studies specifically focusing on individuals on the autism spectrum, and particularly few in children on the spectrum. This makes it difficult to determine what medications work. Doctors do know that medications do not work the same way in individuals on the autism spectrum as they do in individuals with other conditions, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, or other conditions. Medications also do not always work the same way in children as in adults.

If you choose to pursue medication as a treatment for your child, it is critical that you work with a doctor who has experience prescribing medications for individuals on the autism spectrum. Often this will not be your child's pediatrician; you may need to work with a psychiatrist or developmental pediatrician. The doctor should begin by listening to you (and your child) describe your child's strengths and

weaknesses. The doctor can help you identify which areas of need can be addressed with medication, and which ones may not be directly affected. If you are interested in learning more, the doctor should explain the various medication options as well as their side effects. He or she will likely make a recommendation about how to proceed as well as discuss the treatment plan. For example, some medications are begun in low doses and are gradually increased as needed. Your doctor will also give you an indication of how long it may take for the medication to take effect. While the effects of some medications are almost immediate, others take a while to build up in your system and effects may not be seen for several weeks.

Take time to consider all the information your doctor provides before making a decision about whether to try a medication. If you choose to go forward, make sure you follow all of the doctor's guidelines about how much to take and when. If your child is not able to swallow a pill, talk with your doctor and pharmacist to see if the medication is available in liquid form or if the pill can be made into a suspension. Don't try to convert the pill into liquid form yourself, as this can alter the medication. When getting the prescription from your doctor, schedule a time to check in with your doctor to discuss how the medication is working.

Keep a record of when your child takes the medication. Also, take notes about any changes in your child's behavior that you observe. Don't forget to alert the school nurse about the medication, even if your child won't be taking it at school. This is important in case your child experiences side effects during the school day.

Report any adverse side effects to your doctor immediately. Do not, however, discontinue the medication without speaking to the doctor. Some medications cannot be stopped abruptly; they must be gradually reduced.

Related Articles:

- [How Do I Choose a Treatment?](#)
- [How to Choose a Treatment Provider](#)

Recommended Link:

- [CAR Resource Directory™ \(search for "Psychiatry" in the Mental/Behavioral Health category\)](#)

## Additional Resources:

- [Medications for Autism](#)

The Center for Autism Research and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia do not endorse or recommend any specific person or organization or form of treatment . The information included within the CAR Autism Roadmap & trade; and CAR Resource Directory & trade; should not be considered medical advice and should serve only as a guide to resources publicly and privately available . Choosing a treatment, course of action, and/or a resource is a personal decision, which should take into account each individual's and family's particular circumstances .

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