

Addressing the Stimulant Shortage: Tips for Primary Care Clinicians

The stimulant shortage is affecting both methylphenidate (MPH) and amphetamine (AMP) classes of medications. However, it is very unpredictable by pharmacy and region; i.e. different preparations may be available at one pharmacy and not another even within the same region of the state. The situation is changing weekly and may not be available one week, but then available the next. Here are some tips to help you and the families in your practice address this unpredictable situation.

Prescribing Tips for Clinicians

1. Be familiar with the different preparations and durations of action for the two classes of stimulants, methylphenidate (MPH) based and amphetamine (AMP) based preparations.
2. Identify “comparables” for each class of stimulant; different preparations use the same chemical as the main ingredient so their effectiveness is roughly equivalent (e.g. Metadate 10 mg is equivalent to Ritalin 10 mg). The major differences are in how long each formulation acts. Some formulations last a few hours (e.g. Ritalin), some 6-8 hours (e.g. Metadate CD), and others 8-12 hours (e.g. Concerta, Adderall XR).
3. Be familiar with differences in the dose equivalences. For questions or concerns about this call Project TEACH at 1-855-227-7272. For example:
 - a. Generally speaking, amphetamine-based preparations are twice as potent as methylphenidate-based so are dosed roughly at 50% MPH dose. Exceptions are:
 1. Focalin (dexmethylphenidate) is dosed like an AMP preparation
 2. Vyvanse is dosed like an MPH preparation
 - b. Concerta 18 mg is roughly equivalent to 6 mg immediate release MPH given TID.
 - c. Adderall XR 20 mg is roughly equivalent to Adderall immediate release 10 mg BID.
4. MD/APRN/PAs: Consider rewriting prescription for an available “comparable”.

Helping Families Plan and Access Medications

1. Advise families to be proactive and stay in close touch with their pharmacist to stay ahead of this. Although pharmacists are not allowed to fill stimulant prescriptions early, families can call their pharmacy a few days in advance to confirm that supplies are available. This will also give families time to make alternative plans if necessary.
2. If the family has a relationship with a pharmacist, then have the family call for guidance about what preparations are/are not available and to ask if they are aware of availability at other pharmacies. Be prepared that some pharmacists may not be willing to share this information.
3. Have the family call different pharmacies, starting with the larger companies, to speak with a pharmacist to determine what is available at their pharmacy:
 - GoodRx
 - Rite Aide
 - CVS
 - Walgreens
 - Wegmans
 - Walmart
4. Advise parents to consider conserving medication by taking lower doses on the weekends or vacations, if possible.

If you have any questions or concerns, call Project TEACH at 1-855-227-7272.

Our child and adolescent psychiatrists are available Monday - Friday from 9 am - 5 pm.