

**Limited evidence for benefits of methylphenidate in ADHD****Clinical Question**

How effective is methylphenidate for children and adolescents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)?

**Bottom Line**

Methylphenidate may improve teacher-reported ADHD symptoms, teacher-reported general behaviour, and parent-reported quality of life for children and adolescents diagnosed with ADHD. Within the short follow-up periods typical of the included trials (average duration 75 days), there was some evidence that methylphenidate was associated with an increased risk of non-serious adverse events, such as sleep problems and decreased appetite, but no evidence that it increased the risk of serious adverse events. Age of participants ranged from three to 18 years, with a male to female ratio of five to one.

**Caveat**

The evidence was low quality, being limited by serious risk of bias in the included trials, under-reporting of relevant outcome data, and a high level of statistical variation between the results of the trials. Data on serious adverse events were reported by only nine of the 185 included trials. Only 93 of the 185 included trials reported on specific and overall non-serious adverse events. Forty percent of trials were funded by industry.

**Context**

ADHD is one of the most commonly diagnosed and treated psychiatric disorders in childhood. Methylphenidate is the drug most often prescribed to treat children and adolescents with ADHD.

**Cochrane Systematic Review**

[Storebo OJ et al. Methylphenidate for children and adolescents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder \(ADHD\). Cochrane Reviews, 2015, Issue 11. Art. No.: CD009885.DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD009885.pub2.](#) This review contains 185 studies involving 12,245 participants.