

MAKING EVERY EATING OPPORTUNITY COUNT

Supporting children taking ADHD medication



Many children taking stimulant medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) eat less during the day. While this can be worrying for families, it's a common side effect that can usually be managed with a few practical strategies.

The key is to work with your child's appetite, rather than trying to make them eat when they're simply not hungry.

Understand your child's appetite pattern

Stimulant medication doesn't usually take away appetite all day. For many children, appetite follows a predictable pattern:



Morning (before medication)

Appetite is usually at its strongest



Middle of the day

Appetite often decreases while the medication is working



Late afternoon and evening

As the medication wears off, appetite often returns

Knowing this pattern can help you plan meals and snacks around the times your child is most likely to eat.

Make the most of breakfast

Breakfast is often the best opportunity to provide important nutrients before medication starts working.

Aim for a filling breakfast that includes foods such as:

- Eggs
- Wholegrain cereal or toast
- Milk or yoghurt
- Fruit



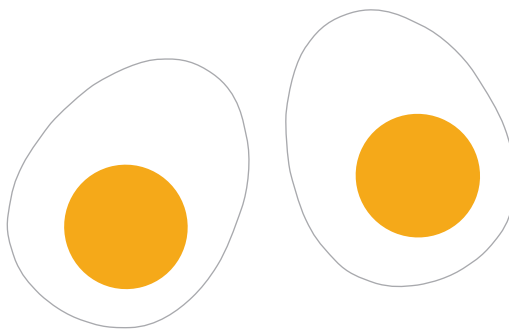
Focus on nutrient-dense foods

When children have fewer opportunities to eat, every mouthful matters. Choose foods that pack plenty of nutrition into small portions.

Eggs are a great option

Two eggs provide:

- **12.7 g of protein** – containing all nine essential amino acids that the body cannot make on its own
- **17 vitamins and nutrients including:**
 - Vitamin D
 - Iron
 - Iodine
 - Choline
 - Omega-3 fats
 - B vitamins



Other nutrient-rich snack ideas include yoghurt, cheese, nuts, peanut butter or dried fruit.

Be flexible with mealtimes

If your child isn't hungry at the usual dinner time, that's okay.

Some children eat better later in the evening once their medication has worn off. A later dinner or nutritious evening snack may work better than sticking to a strict schedule.

The goal is to make the most of the times when they are hungry.

When should you seek advice?

Speak with your child's doctor if you notice:

- Ongoing weight loss or slowing growth
- Your child regularly missing meals without making up for them later

They'll monitor your child and discuss strategies if needed. A dietitian may also be helpful if extra nutritional support is required.

REMEMBER

Lack of appetite is a common and manageable side effect of ADHD medication. By understanding your child's appetite pattern and choosing nutrient-rich foods, you can help support healthy growth while they continue to benefit from their treatment.