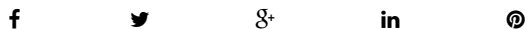


Consumer Reports to Parents: Think Twice About Free Prescription ADHD Drug Samples for Your Children

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Consumers Could Save Roughly \$3,000 A Year By Switching From Expensive Brand Name Drugs to Equally Effective Generics To Treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

YONKERS, N.Y., July 8 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- According to a new *Consumer Reports* Best Buy Drugs report, parents should be skeptical if their doctors offer them free prescription drug samples, especially for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Free samples can hook consumers on high-priced brand name drugs that are not any better or safer than less expensive generic medicines. In addition, when doctors give out free samples, they often fail to give patients information inserts that highlight important safety and side effect information.

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs found that two generic ADHD drugs, dextroamphetamine and methylphenidate, are as safe and effective as well-known drugs like Adderall XR, Concerta or Strattera. By switching to one of those two generic drugs, consumers could save roughly \$3,000 a year off the retail price. The report is available for free online at www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs (<http://www.consumerreportshealth.org/BestBuyDrugs>).

"Parents want to do what is best for their children," says Dr. John Santa, director of the *Consumer Reports* Health Ratings Center. "But free samples and clever advertising convince them they should be shelling out thousands of dollars a year for brand name prescription drugs when equally effective generics are available."

ADHD is one of the most common behavioral problems diagnosed among school-age children in the United States and about 7 percent (about 4.5 million in 2006) of children aged 4 to 17 have been diagnosed with the disorder. When ADHD needs to be treated with medication, parents may be presented with advertisements and free samples of expensive brand-name drugs.

Drug companies gave away an estimated \$16 billion in free drug samples in 2004, and doctors routinely hand out these free samples to parents. In fact, according to one October 2008 study in the journal of Pediatrics; about 1 out of every 10 kids already taking a medication got a free drug sample. According to that study, which looked at data from 2004, the ADHD drug Strattera was the 4th most common free drug sample given to children; Adderall XR was in the top 15.

A recent poll by the *Consumer Reports* National Research Center revealed that 80 percent of Americans who take prescription drugs have received free samples from their physicians. "The use of free samples is extremely prevalent and insidious," said Santa. "And is likely not the best first-choice treatment for a patient's condition."

"Once the samples run out, consumers are likely to end up with sticker shock when they go to fill the prescription," explained Santa. Moreover, samples often do not contain a patient package insert, which describe important safety information.

Ensure a Correct ADHD Diagnosis



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Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs notes that many young patients who take ADHD drugs either do not have ADHD or have only mild symptoms. Before starting any drug treatment for ADHD, it's essential to get an accurate diagnosis by a medical professional.

"Few children present with symptoms of ADHD that can be easily diagnosed by simple observation," said Dr. Orly Avitzur, medical adviser, Consumers Union. "Most need to be evaluated with formal testing, and questionnaires answered by the parents and teachers. A complete history and physical examination should also be performed before medication is prescribed."

Children or teens with ADHD exhibit a persistent pattern, lasting six months or more, including impulsive behavior, hyperactivity, and/or lack of focus and inability to complete a task. A pediatrician, primary care doctor or mental-health professional should always begin by ruling out other possible reasons for their behavior. Parents should question a medical professional who diagnoses ADHD on the first visit and prescribes a drug on the spot.

ADHD Drugs May Only Work for a Few Years

And there is another hitch: a recent study shows that at least one ADHD stimulant drug, methylphenidate (Ritalin), may only work for a few years. There is little evidence proving a clear benefit beyond that. Long term studies have not been done on other ADHD drugs. Parents should routinely check in with their child's doctor about whether the drugs are still working since all stimulant drugs, along with Strattera (a non-stimulant), may have long-term risks, including possibly suppressing a child's growth and a rare risk of sudden death, stroke or heart attack.

Methodology

The *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* report on drugs to treat ADHD is based on a systematic review of hundreds of research articles and studies, where the risks and benefits of one drug or many drugs against each other are evaluated. This kind of systematic review is known as comparative effectiveness and all *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* reports use this process as the basis for their drug Ratings.

Find out more about the *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* program that evaluates more than 200 drugs for dozens of common conditions here: www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org/Best-Buy-Drugs (<http://www.consumerreportshealth.org/Best-Buy-Drugs>).

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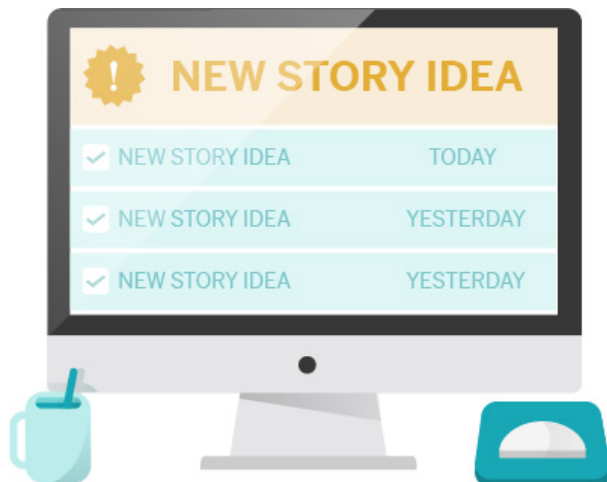
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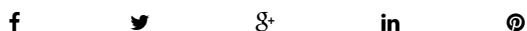
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