

ADHD MEDICATION · 4.5

Guanfacine for ADHD: When It Fits and What to Expect

Guanfacine (Intuniv) is a non-stimulant ADHD medication with a different mechanism from atomoxetine and stimulants. Licensed in the UK for children and adolescents aged 6 to 17.

FOR

Parents considering or starting Intuniv for their child

AUDIENCE AGE

6-17

REVIEWED

17 May 2026

PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

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What guanfacine does

- **Acts on the prefrontal cortex through alpha-2A receptors.** A different mechanism from stimulants and atomoxetine. It strengthens signal transmission in the brain circuits that handle working memory, attention and behavioural regulation.
- **Licensed for children and adolescents.** Intuniv (and generic modified-release guanfacine) is licensed in the UK for ADHD aged 6 to 17 where stimulants are not suitable, not tolerated, or have not worked. Off-label use in adults occurs in specialist settings.
- **Not a controlled drug.** Prescriptions can include repeats and are not subject to the 28-day stimulant rules.

When it fits and what to expect

- **Particularly useful in some specific pictures.** ADHD with co-occurring tics or Tourette syndrome, significant emotional dysregulation or oppositional features, persistent sleep difficulty where the sedating side effect is welcome, or stimulant intolerance plus inadequate response to atomoxetine.
- **Slowest titration of the licensed UK ADHD medications.** Doses are usually increased no sooner than once weekly to allow blood pressure and heart rate to settle. A working dose typically takes six to eight weeks. Clinical benefit emerges across the first four to six weeks.
- **Lowers blood pressure and heart rate.** Unlike stimulants and atomoxetine, which raise both. Dizziness on standing, fainting and sedation are the cardiovascular side effects to watch for, especially early in titration.
- **Early sedation often settles.** Two to four weeks of mild sleepiness during the day is common at the start. For some patients with sleep difficulty, the sedating effect is a useful side benefit.
- **Never stop guanfacine abruptly.** Sudden withdrawal can cause rebound rises in blood pressure and heart rate. A planned taper with the prescriber is required.

How we support you

- **Specialist initiation in the UK pathway.** Guanfacine must be initiated by a clinician with ADHD expertise. NeuroFX provides that pathway for children and adolescents, and considers off-label use in adults where the clinical picture supports it.
- **Cardiovascular monitoring through titration.** Baseline and ongoing measurements of blood pressure, heart rate, weight and growth, with dose adjustments where the picture calls for it.
- **Shared care with your GP where the ICB accepts it.** Once stable, ongoing prescribing can transfer to the NHS GP. Where the local ICB declines, we offer continued private prescribing.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP, your prescriber or NHS 111 if a new symptom worries you, if dizziness on standing is significant, or if changes to mood, sleep or appetite are not settling. Seek urgent help via 999 or A&E for fainting, chest pain, or any acute mental health crisis. Never stop guanfacine abruptly; always taper under prescriber direction.

SOURCES

NICE NG87; BNFc; BNF; Cortese et al. 2018 (Lancet Psychiatry)

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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