

Pill Shortage Impacts Productivity: 'People Unable to Focus'

Countless people depend on the powerful stimulant Adderall to get through their day, but when supply chain shortages interfere with access, they're left in despair.

[Dr. Joseph Mercola](#) 24 hr ago

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- A labor shortage at Teva Pharmaceuticals, the top supplier of Adderall and its generic counterpart to the U.S., kicked off a shortage of the popular drug

- People from California, Indiana, Michigan and other states were told by their pharmacies that Adderall was out of stock during August or September 2022
- Among adults aged 22 to 44, the use of Adderall jumped 15.1% from 2020 to 2021; much of the increase is attributed to the loosening of regulations during the pandemic, which made it easy for people to get the drugs without seeing a health care provider in person
- As a Schedule II drug, Adderall is classified as a medication with considerable abuse potential
- Adderall and other stimulants can cause serious adverse effects, including psychosis, heart attack, cardiomyopathy and even sudden death

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Supply chain issues have impacted the availability of everything from bicycles and lumber to hot sauce and cream cheese.¹ Now it's medications that are being affected — specifically Adderall, a popular stimulant drug often prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), but which is also used by an increasing number of youth and young adults to increase productivity and stay awake.²

The problem began with a labor shortage at Teva Pharmaceuticals, the

top supplier of Adderall and its generic counterpart to the U.S., during the summer of 2022. This led to a limited supply of the pills, which soon spread to other manufacturers, including Amneal Pharmaceuticals, Rhodes Pharmaceuticals and Novartis, all of which had generic Adderall on backorder.³

With the pills suddenly unavailable, a harsh reality set in for people across the U.S., as depression, irritability and difficulty concentrating occurred as symptoms of withdrawal. So many people are taking the drugs that a real dent in productivity is possible without them — a sad testimony to the state of mental and physical health, and the health care system in general, in the U.S. As ZeroHedge put it:⁴

“We would love to see the productivity metrics of performance-based companies over the next several months to see how an Adderall shortage impacted productivity. Then again, Wall Street has the luxury of another stimulant if an Adderall shortage affects Manhattan pharmacies; that is cocaine.”

Adderall Shortage Spans Multiple States

Reporters from Bloomberg spoke with people from California, Indiana, Michigan and other states who were told by their pharmacies that Adderall was out of stock during August or September 2022. While the medication is meant to be taken daily, backlogs of up to a week were reported at pharmacies, while drug manufacturers reported the pills were on backorder for a month.

While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has denied any widespread Adderall shortages, stating, “The demand is being met for the overall market,” pharmacists are reporting otherwise.⁵ A survey by

the National Community Pharmacists Association further found that 64% of small pharmacies had trouble obtaining brand name and generic Adderall from July 25 to August 5, 2022, due to the medications being on backorder.⁶

“There are supply chain challenges with this drug,” Walgreens spokesperson Rebekah Pajak also told Bloomberg. The news outlet reported:⁷

“The disruptions are occurring at a time of record-high demand driven by increasing ADHD diagnoses. During the Covid pandemic, the federal government also made it easier for clinicians to prescribe the drugs through telehealth appointments, which removed barriers to access and also made possible the growth of online startups that connect patients with prescribers.

Some of those prescription startups have come under scrutiny. Bloomberg has previously reported on aggressive prescribing practices at the startups Cerebral Inc. and Done Health. Cerebral has stopped prescribing many controlled substances, including for ADHD, though Done continues to do so.”

The use of amphetamines like Adderall increased 2.5-fold from 2006 to 2016.⁸ Among adults aged 22 to 44, the use of Adderall, specifically, jumped 15.1% from 2020 to 2021.⁹ Much of the increase is attributed to the loosening of regulations during the pandemic, which made it easy for people to get the drugs without seeing a health care provider in person.

“In hindsight, it is clear that the emergence of digital mental health platforms enabled significant increases in prescribing, particularly for

the Millennial generation,” Trilliant Health reported.¹⁰ They found that there are now more adults taking Adderall than there are adults with a formal ADHD diagnosis. “This discrepancy likely speaks to the number of individuals using a direct-to-consumer, self-pay service in this clinical scenario.”¹¹

Overall, there were 41 million prescriptions for Adderall written in the U.S. in 2021, a 10% increase from 2020.¹²

Without Adderall, Productivity at Work Affected

Adderall, which is a combination of dextroamphetamine and amphetamine, acts as a stimulant to the central nervous system. In people with ADHD, the drugs are used to enhance attention, memory, self-regulation and executive function,¹³ but many people — from college students to athletes to executives — seek out the drugs due to their reputation as “smart pills” or “study drugs” that enhance productivity and brain power.¹⁴

The boost to focus and concentration comes with a price, however. As a Schedule II drug, Adderall is classified as a medication with considerable abuse potential. It increases levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the body, which trigger a feel-good effect that makes users want more. According to the Addiction Center:¹⁵

“People abuse Adderall because it produces feelings of confidence, euphoria, increased concentration, and a suppressed appetite. These effects make Adderall a go-to choice for anyone looking for a boost in physical or mental performance.

... The brain of an addicted person is dependent on Adderall to

stimulate alertness and productivity. Without Adderall, addicted people often feel tired and mentally foggy. These are symptoms of Adderall withdrawal, a strong sign of an addiction."

In addition to addiction, Adderall and other stimulants can cause serious adverse effects, including psychosis, heart attack, cardiomyopathy and even sudden death.¹⁶ When the pills aren't available, regular users find themselves unable to function in their daily lives. BuzzFeed News spoke with 20 people in the U.S. who shared similar stories of declining productivity and plummeting mental health without access to the medications. Kyle, 27, told BuzzFeed:¹⁷

"I'm constantly nervous that I won't be able to get my medicine, and I'll get fired and not be able to find another job and turn back into a gross depressed garbage monster who hates himself for not being able to do his laundry. I'll just be stressed and upset all the time."

Anthony Anderson, a 34-year-old special education teacher, told Bloomberg that he's having trouble concentrating during work, including when trying to have important conversations with students. "I even spaced out when I'm trying to have a serious conversation with this girl to console her, but I spaced out because I'm not able to focus," he said. "This is a huge issue for me."¹⁸

Setting Kids Up for a Lifetime of Addiction

Children — even babies — are being prescribed powerful psychiatric drugs, setting them up for a lifetime of dependence on medications that carry serious side effects, many of which are unknown for long-term usage. In 2014, the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), a mental health watchdog group, highlighted data showing

that in 2013, 274,000 babies aged 1 and younger were given psychiatric drugs, including 1,422 were on ADHD drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall.¹⁹

In the toddler category (2- to 3-year-olds), 10,000 were prescribed ADHD drugs, while among children aged 5 and younger, 1,080,168 were on psychiatric drugs. Considering these statistics are 6 years old, chances are they're even higher today. Just what will happen to all of these youngsters as they grow up dependent on medications to function? As mentioned in the article:²⁰

“When it comes to the psychiatric drugs used to treat ADHD, these are referred to as ‘kiddie cocaine’ for a reason. Ritalin (methylphenidate), Adderall (amphetamine) and Concerta are all considered by the federal government as Schedule II drugs — the most addictive.

ADHD drugs also have serious side effects such as agitation, mania, aggressive or hostile behavior, seizures, hallucinations, and even sudden death, according to the National Institutes of Health. And the Food and Drug Administration still mandates that all labels for ADHD stimulants state, ‘Long-term effects of amphetamines in children have not been well established.’”

When considering Adderall use for children or adults, it's important to understand that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration categorizes it the same as cocaine, morphine and opium. The drugs have effects that are “similar to taking meth,” including heart disease, according to neurologist Dr. Don Gervais, who stated:²¹

“When you abuse these medications, it can lead to progressive and

early drug-induced Parkinson-ism, which is just one more disease should you survive the cardiovascular complications past 40 years old ... I've had people overdose on these medications and had intracranial hemorrhages, strokes from blood vessel problems, dependency, sleep disorders, cardiac dysrhythmias.

These are not to be used lightly or without supervision, and my opinion but this is just my opinion, I believe they tend to be overused and used too quickly."

Getting to the Root of the Problem

Whether you're a child with ADHD or an adult with low energy and difficulty concentrating, medications like Adderall do not cure the disease or underlying conditions that are interfering with your quality of life. A holistic approach is necessary for addressing ADHD and other mental health conditions.

Exercise, for instance, appears to benefit cognitive, behavioral and socio-emotional functions in children and adults with ADHD.²² Exposure to food additives, an imbalanced gut microbiome and a deficiency in omega-3 fats²³ are other essential pieces to mental health.

If you or your child is struggling with ADHD or ADHD-like symptoms, or other behavioral or mental health conditions, I recommend consulting with a holistic physician who is experienced in treating these problems using natural methods instead of simply covering up their symptoms with dangerous drugs.

For those in need of an energy boost, one of the most effective ways to

optimize your energy and combat fatigue is to implement time-restricted eating (TRE), as it improves your mitochondrial health and metabolic flexibility. You also need to remove dietary and lifestyle factors that cause the energy depletion in the first place — factors like exposure to electromagnetic fields and leaky gut caused by lectins in your diet.

Another dietary factor that decimates mitochondrial health, and thus energy production, is omega-6 linoleic acid (LA), which is found in vegetable oils and virtually every ultraprocessed food. LA contributes to insulin resistance, obesity and chronic inflammation, and when mitochondria detect inflammation, they dial down energy production to shift resources toward self-defense.

On a more general level, common threats that can result in reduced mitochondrial energy production — leading to low energy — include oxidative stress, poor nutrition, environmental toxins, psychological stress, light deficiency (lack of sun exposure) and sleep deprivation.

What you'll notice is that no pill can effectively address all of the complexities that are necessary to truly experience boundless energy and razor-sharp focus. This requires your body functioning on a level of optimal health, which is only achieved when you commit to a healthy lifestyle. The best part is, though, that when you integrate these strategies into your day, no one can take them from you — not a pharmacy, not a doctor and not even a worldwide supply chain disruption.

You'll be free to continue living your life feeling your best, without any interruptions. For those in the midst of a mental health crisis, it can feel overwhelming to make positive changes. Focus on making one small

change at a time, and seek the help of a holistic psychiatrist who uses a whole-body approach to heal your mind and body.

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