



Drug Holidays

& Summer activities

by Dr. Henry Svec

As the school year ends, I wanted to discuss with you the common practice of removing helpful medication when your child is not in school.

Firstly, let me remind you that I am not a physician. Any changes to you or your child's medication routine should only be done under the direct supervision of a physician.

Traditionally it was thought that 'drug holidays' will assist you in combating the side effects of the medication that you are taking. In conducting a search of the literature, I'm now not sure. Throughout the school year, medication can assist children in improved school performance and grades but also social skills and quality of life on the playground.

Effective use of medication assists your child in learning how to develop social skills in different settings and the improved school performance builds on self-esteem. That is where the beneficial psychological impact of effective use of medication can come into play. If your child has benefited from this form of treatment consider the following:

- 1 The summer is a time for camp and other social activities. These situations are very much like school, requiring compliance with rules and structure.
- 2 During the school year, self esteem has been enhanced by positive experiences. It takes years to build up self esteem in a child, teen or young adult. Three months away from an effective treatment tool could result in a number of negative experiences that will cause a "slide" in self esteem.
- 3 Often, summer school or brief times of remedial education are recommended to keep children in the routine of learning. It is important to take advantage of these brief learning times during the summer.
- 4 Teens especially will begin to wonder of the need for any assistance with their ADHD symptoms altogether. If you have a teenager that is compliant with taking the medication as prescribed by the doctor, stopping for three months may make it very difficult to continue with this form of treatment in September.
- 5 Do you deserve great times with your child? In cases where behavioral symptoms are part of ADHD and medication has assisted with a reduction of disruption, your relationship with your child will be enhanced if your child continues to take their medication as prescribed.

The final decision on a "drug holiday" should only be contemplated if you or your child have considered the various issues associated with it and discuss your thoughts with your physician. While no clear direction is suggested in the literature I reviewed, providing an environment for the continued improvement in self esteem during the summer appears to be the most important psychological factor supporting summer use.