



LITHIUM - INFORMED CONSENT FOR MEDICATION

<u>Medication Category:</u> Mood Stabilizing Agent: Lithium (Also called stabilizing medication)	<u>Medications in this Category:</u> lithium (Eskalith) (Lithobid) (Lithonate) (Lithane) (Lithotabs) Lithium citrate (Cibalith — 5)
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Anticipated dosage range: \_\_\_\_\_

About your medicine: Lithium is a mood stabilizer. It normalizes emotional states and reduces the extreme behavior and feelings associated with bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness). It also stabilizes mood swings in other disorders. In addition, it is sometimes used to increase the effectiveness of antidepressants and other medications. It is not known how lithium works to stabilize a person’s mood; however, it does act on the central nervous system and seems to stabilize nerve and muscle cells.

Side Effects: Every medication is capable of producing side effects. Many people who take lithium experience no, or minor side effects. The frequency and severity of side effects depend on many factors including dose, duration of therapy and individual susceptibility.

Possible side effects include:

More common: increased frequency of urination and increased thirst. Tremor, especially of hands, salty or metallic taste, and weight gain. Nausea and diarrhea are also common, especially when lithium is first started.

Less Common: confusion or slowed thinking, slight dizziness, skin rashes, exacerbation of acne or psoriasis. Some individuals may experience decreased thyroid function. Signs of low thyroid function include dry puffs’ skin, unusual weight gain, constipation, feeling cold, muscle aches and tiredness or menstrual changes.

Rare: Permanent kidney damage has been suggested as a rare complication of lithium use. Heartbeat irregularities have been reported, but are extremely rare.

Precautions: Lithium toxicity: Lithium blood levels greater than 1.5 mEq/L have a greater risk of leading to lithium toxicity. Early signs of overdose or toxicity include diarrhea, vomiting, drowsiness, muscle weakness, slurred speech, and increased trembling. Late signs of overdose or toxicity include blurred vision, clumsiness or unsteadiness, confusion, and eventually, seizures.

***Lithium causes birth defects, and should not be taken by pregnant women.***

By my signature below, I give consent for the above-named medication to be administered and for a change of medication within this medication category. My signature also indicates that I am aware of, have read and discussed the reasons for the use of this medication, and its potential risks and benefits.

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## General Guidelines for Use:

- Always inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you have ever had an allergic reaction to any medication before starting on a new medication.
- In order for your lithium to work properly, it must be taken regularly every day. Continue to take these drugs as directed, even after symptoms are no longer present. The medication controls the illness and keep symptoms from returning. These medications are not addicting.
- If a dose is missed, take it as soon as possible. It is usually safe to take an entire day's dose at one time. If you are scheduled to take medication several times a day and you forget one of the doses, it is usually safe to take the missed medication along with the next scheduled dose. There may be more side effects if you do this, and you should be careful if you are driving or operating machinery. If you have any questions about missed medication, contact your prescriber or case manager. If medication for an entire day is missed, do not double the dose in order to "catch up" (unless advised to do so by your prescriber). Just restart taking the medication as prescribed.
- Taking this medicine after a meal or snack will decrease the chance of stomach upset.
- Drink 8-12 glasses of water or other liquid every day while taking this medication and use regular amounts of table salt.
- Use extra care during hot weather, or if engaging in increased strenuous activities, or if you have an infection or illness that causes you to sweat heavily. The loss of too much water and salt from your body could increase the risk of lithium toxicity. Drinking adequate amounts of water will prevent or decrease the chance of your experiencing this problem.
- It is important that you know the early symptoms of lithium toxicity and contact your prescriber if you experience these symptoms.
- It is important to have a blood test at regular intervals to find out your lithium level. Even people who have taken lithium for a long time can find their lithium level increasing or decreasing for no apparent reason, and without them being aware of it. Normally, lithium blood tests are taken at least every three months, but extra blood tests should be taken if there are problems. Anyone on lithium who becomes nauseous, develops diarrhea, or becomes confused should have a lithium level taken to make sure that their level has not become too high. A normal lithium level is between 0.8 and 1.2, although some people can be treated with less and some people need more.
- Notify your prescriber if you are pregnant or intend to become pregnant or if you are breast-feeding. This medication is known to cause birth defects.
- Keep out of the reach of children.