

LITHIUM

Is a medication known as a “mood stabiliser”.

It is used to treat disorders such as:

- mania (feeling highly excited, overactive or distracted)
- hypo-mania (similar to mania, but less severe)
- regular periods of depression, where treatment with other medicines has not worked
- bipolar disorder, where your mood changes between feeling very high (mania) and very low (depression)

It can also help reduce aggressive or self-harming behaviour.

Monitoring:

When your medication is prescribed by the GP, you will be required to have regular blood test monitoring, to ensure their optimum safety.

You will need to have a Lithium blood test every 12 weeks.

You will also need a Calcium Test (Ca), a Thyroid Function Test (TFT) and a Kidney Function Test (U&E) every 6 months.

If your Lithium dose is changed you will be required to have a Lithium blood test a week later to ensure the dose is not too high or too low.

You will also be required to provide your weight or BMI every 6 months.

Information:

When started on this medication you will usually be given a lithium treatment pack which includes a record book and lithium alert card. If you have not received one of these packs please let your specialist or pharmacy know so they can provide you one.

You should always carry the Lithium alert card on your person in case of emergency.

Serious Side Effects:

If you experience any of these symptoms, STOP taking your Lithium and call 999 or go to A&E as these are signs of Lithium toxicity.

- stomach ache, feeling sick (nausea) and having diarrhoea
- problems with your eyesight (blurred vision)
- feeling very thirsty, needing to pee more than normal, and lack of control over pee or poo
- feeling lightheaded or drowsy
- confusion and blackouts
- shaking, muscle weakness, muscle twitches, jerks or spasms affecting the face, tongue, eyes or neck
- difficulty speaking

Long Term Side Effects:

If you've been taking lithium for a long time, it can cause weight gain.

If you find you're putting on weight after taking lithium for a while, try to have a healthy balanced diet. Regular exercise will also help you keep your weight stable.

Your doctor will usually monitor your weight while you're taking this medicine.

Taking lithium for a long time can also cause problems with your kidneys or thyroid gland.

Common signs of an underactive thyroid are tiredness, weight gain and feeling depressed.

Signs of kidney problems include swollen hands or ankles, feeling tired and short of breath, changes in your pee and feeling sick.

Tell your doctor if you get any these symptoms. Your doctor will arrange blood tests to check for any changes in your thyroid and kidneys.

Pregnancy and Breastfeeding:

Speak to your doctor or specialist if you're planning a pregnancy or become pregnant. They'll want to review your medicine to check that it's the best treatment option for you and your baby.

Speak to your doctor or specialist if you are planning to breastfeed.