
LITHIUM (Eskalith) Fact Sheet for Patients

Generic Name: Lithium (LITH-ee-um)

Brand Names: Eskalith, Lithobid

What Does It Treat?

Lithium is used to treat bipolar disorder (manic depressive disorder). It stabilizes mood and reduces extreme mood fluctuations by restoring the balance of neurotransmitters in the brain.

How Does It Work?

Lithium is a mood stabilizer. While the exact way lithium works is unknown, it is believed to help strengthen nerve cell connections in brain regions that are involved in regulating mood, behavior, and response to stress.

How Do I Take It?

Lithium is available as a tablet, capsule, or liquid. Your health care provider will determine the appropriate dosage and frequency, which is usually two to three times per day with meals.

What is the Dose?

The typical dosage for lithium, used for bipolar disorder, is 600-1200 mg per day, guided by blood levels. The dosing depends on both the condition being treated and the product being used and should be determined by your health care provider.

How Long Will I Take It?

The duration of treatment with lithium can vary widely depending on your condition and how you respond to the medication. Some people may need to take it for long periods, possibly years, under the supervision of their health care provider.

What If I Miss a Dose?

If you miss a dose of lithium, take it as soon as you remember. But if it's almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and just take your next dose at the usual time. Do not double up doses to make up for the one you missed.

What Are Possible Side Effects?

- Most common: Sedation, nausea, diarrhea, thirst, frequent urination, hand tremor, increased appetite, weight gain, changes in thyroid function.
- Serious but rare: Unusual drowsiness, dizziness or fainting, changes in heartbeat, changes in kidney function, slurred speech.

What Else Should I Know?

- Lithium may interact with other medications, so inform your health care provider of all the medications you are taking.
- You should not take lithium if you are allergic to it, or if you have significant kidney or cardiovascular disease.
- Before starting lithium, tell your health care provider if you have a history of thyroid disease, heart disease, kidney problems, or a low-sodium diet.

Remember, this fact sheet provides general information about this medication. For more specific guidance and instructions, consult your health care provider.