

# Information on Lithium

**Lithium** is used as a mood stabiliser for treatment of bipolar disorder and its relapse. It can also be used to treat both manic and depressive episodes. After you start taking the treatment with **lithium**, you will need regular blood tests to make sure that the level of lithium in your body is appropriate. If the level of **lithium** is too low, it won't work.; if too high, it may cause drug side effects or toxicity. It can take up to a few weeks or even months for **lithium** to work properly. Therefore, it is important to continue to take the medication even if the effect is not obvious immediately.

## Side-effects include:

- occasional diarrhoea
- nausea
- feeling thirsty
- metallic taste in the mouth
- fine trembling of the hands
- urinating more often than usual
- weight gain

Taking **lithium** for a prolonged period may affect the renal and thyroid functions. Therefore, you will need to have blood tests regularly. The amount of **lithium** in your blood is easily affected by the fluid level in your body. Please intake enough water to prevent from lithium toxicity. If you are dehydrated, the level of lithium in your blood will rise, and you may experience the following toxic effects:

- feeling very thirsty
- severe diarrhoea or vomiting
- obvious shaking of your hands and legs
- muscle twitching
- blurred vision
- confusion or muddled thinking
- coma

Contact your doctor immediately if you experience the above symptoms.

Please follow the below diet guidelines to keep your **lithium** blood level stable:

- Drink 8-10 glasses of water or other liquids every day
- Keep your salt intake about the same level every day
- Keep your caffeine intake (e.g. tea, coffee or cola) about the same level every day
- Avoid alcoholic beverages
- Take **lithium** with food to minimize digestive side effects

It is advisable to practise contraception while taking **lithium** for female patient. If you are pregnant, or planning to become pregnant, please consult your doctor immediately. Breastfeeding is generally not recommended while taking **lithium**.

Some medicines can affect how **lithium** works. Examples include medicines for depression, blood pressure and pain / arthritis. Tell your doctor if you need to or are taking other medicines.

For any queries, please seek advice from your doctor, pharmacist or other healthcare professionals.

Ref :

1. 醫管局青山醫院精神健康學院「藥物的認識 - 情緒穩定劑」 [Only Chinese Version available] [[https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/doc/information/publications/6\\_07e.pdf](https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/doc/information/publications/6_07e.pdf)]
2. Important Information on Lithium, Castle Peak Hospital / Siu Lam Hospital (Version 1)
3. Information on Lithium, Royal College of Psychiatrist. [<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/bipolar-disorder?searchTerms=lithium>]
4. Guidelines for the Management of Patients on Lithium, NHS, 2011 [[http://www.nhs.uk/borders.scot.nhs.uk/media/243218/lithium\\_guidelines\\_061008.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/borders.scot.nhs.uk/media/243218/lithium_guidelines_061008.pdf)]
5. Lithium Treatment – Monitoring Booklet, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, 2018 [[https://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/lithium\\_information\\_booklet\\_-\\_large\\_font\\_information\\_only\\_-\\_jan\\_18\\_0.pdf](https://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/lithium_information_booklet_-_large_font_information_only_-_jan_18_0.pdf)]

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