

LITHIUM (CAMCOLIT)

What is it used for?



To prevent
mood swings



To treat mania



To treat
depression

Types available in NUH

Follow the instructions on your medicine label carefully and inform your pharmacist or doctor if you are unsure.

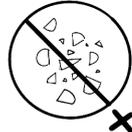
 400mg Controlled Release Tablet

How should I take it?

Take each dose at the same time every day with water, before or after food



Can be swallowed
whole or halved



Do not crush or
chew tablet



Usually taken at night
for blood tests to be
done in the day

What to do if I miss a dose?

1. Take your next dose at the usual time
2. Do not double your dose or take extra medicine
3. If you have missed two or more doses, contact your doctor or pharmacist as you may need a new blood test.
4. If it's less than 6 hours since you were supposed to take your lithium, take it as soon as you remember.
5. If it is more than 6 hours, just skip the missed dose and take your next one at the usual time.

What should I do if I overdose?

If you take more than the prescribed dose, consult your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

Treatment outcome

1. Most people will need to be on it for at least five years if it suits you.
2. It is advisable to stop lithium gradually.
 - If stopped suddenly, there is a risk that it may cause you to have a manic episode.

Possible side effects

Generally affects up to 10% of patients

These side effects should wear off within 1-2 weeks.

Inform your doctor or pharmacist should these side effects become too bothersome:



Nausea, vomiting

Take lithium with or after a meal or snack. Eat simple meals, avoid fatty or spicy foods.



Increased thirst

Avoid sugary and caffeinated drinks and continue to drink plenty of water. Usually in the initial stage of treatment.



Diarrhea

Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Do not take any other medicines to treat diarrhea without speaking to a pharmacist or doctor.



Trembling of hands

This can be dose-related, consult your doctor for possible adjustments to your treatment. Usually in the initial stage of treatment. Avoid driving and using tools or machines.



Dry mouth/Metallic taste in mouth

Try sugar-free gum or sweets, or sipping cold drinks. Usually in the initial stage of treatment.



Drowsiness or dizziness

Do not drive or operate machinery and avoid alcoholic drinks.



Weight gain

Have a balanced diet and regular exercise to stabilise your weight.

*This is only a guide; your medication experience may be different.

Serious side effects

Tell your doctor straight away if you experience:

Lithium toxicity:

Too much lithium in your blood is called lithium toxicity (or lithium poisoning). This can make you very ill. If you experience any of these problems, stop taking your lithium and contact your doctor or another healthcare professional straight away.



Allergic reaction:

Skin rash or itch, difficulty breathing, or swelling in the face, lips, or other parts of the body.



Severe vomiting or diarrhoea



Blurred vision



Confusion, clumsiness and dizziness



Ringing in the ears



Urinating more often



Irregular heartbeat



Extreme tiredness



Seizures

Pregnancy

Taking lithium in early pregnancy may cause heart defects, increase lithium levels in your blood and increase the risk of serious side effects and overdose.

Not planning to become pregnant?

- Use an effective contraception method throughout treatment.

Planning to become pregnant or might already be pregnant?

- Speak to your doctor as soon as possible. He or she will tell you about the best treatment for you and your unborn baby.

Planning to continue taking lithium while pregnant?

- You will need extra health checks.



Breastfeeding

- Avoid breastfeeding while taking lithium
- There is a very high risk of passing on lithium to your baby through your breast milk. This could be dangerous to your baby's health.



Diet

1. About your diet:

- Avoid changing diet abruptly. Ensure that you consume a constant amount of salt.
- Ensure adequate fluid intake (at least 8-12 glasses of water per day).
- Too much water or salt loss from your body may lead to high lithium levels in your blood and cause serious side effects.

2. Never ignore a feeling of thirst and drink plenty of fluids, especially if:

- You are sweating a lot for any reason
- The weather is hot
- You are exercising
- You have a high temperature
- You have diarrhoea

What foods should I avoid?



Alcohol

Decreases the benefits and increases adverse effects of the medication.



Excess caffeine

Avoid excessive caffeine intake from drinks such as coffee, tea or energy drinks. These may decrease levels of lithium and effectiveness of the medication.

Drug interactions



Consult the doctor or pharmacist before taking other medications.

Monitoring

1. Keep to your appointments with your doctor.
2. Regular blood tests are required to monitor your lithium levels, kidney and thyroid function.
3. Checking how much lithium is in your blood:
 - **First few weeks** – a blood sample will be taken from you about a week after you start taking lithium to see how much is in your blood. Your blood will be tested again each week until the level of lithium in your blood is right.
 - **Every three months** – your doctor will do a blood test to check that you still have the right level of lithium in your blood.



Tell your doctor if you are:

1. On other medications
2. Pregnant
3. Trying to get pregnant
4. Breastfeeding

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