

Lithium carbonate drug in detail

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This medication is used to treat manic-depressive disorder (bipolar disorder). It works to stabilize the mood and reduce extremes in behavior by restoring the balance of certain natural substances (neurotransmitters) in the brain. Some of the benefits of continued use of this medication include decreasing how often manic episodes occur and decreasing the symptoms of manic episodes such as exaggerated feelings of well-being, feelings that others wish to harm you, irritability, anxiousness, rapid/loud speech, and aggressive/hostile behaviors.

Take this medication by mouth as directed by your doctor, usually 2-3 times daily. Take lithium with or immediately after meals to lessen stomach upset. Do not crush or chew this medication. Doing so can release all of the drug at once, increasing the risk of side effects. Also, do not split the tablets unless they have a score line and your doctor or pharmacist tells you to do so. Swallow the whole or split tablet without crushing or chewing.

Drink 8 to 12 glasses (8 ounces or 240 milliliters each) of water or other fluid each day, and eat a healthy diet with normal amounts of salt (sodium) as directed by your doctor or dietician while taking this medication. Large changes in the amount of salt in your diet may change your lithium blood levels. Do not change the amount of salt in your diet unless your doctor tells you to do so.

Use this medication regularly to get the most benefit from it. To help you remember, take it at the same times each day. The dosage is based on your medical condition, lithium blood levels, and response to treatment. This medication works best if the amount of the drug in your body is kept at a constant level. Take this drug at evenly spaced intervals.

Remember that this medication has been prescribed because your doctor has judged that the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this medication do not have serious side effects.

Tell your doctor right away if you have any serious side effects, including: diarrhea, vomiting, unsteady walk, confusion, trouble speaking, blurred vision, severe hand trembling (coarse tremor), vision changes (such as growing blind spot, vision loss), joint swelling/pain, pain/discoloration of finger/toes, cold hands/feet.

This medication may increase serotonin and rarely cause a very serious condition called serotonin syndrome/toxicity. The risk increases if you are also taking other drugs that increase serotonin, so tell your doctor or pharmacist of all the drugs you take (see Drug Interactions section). Get medical help right away if you develop some of the following symptoms: fast heartbeat, hallucinations, loss of coordination, severe dizziness, severe nausea/vomiting/diarrhea, twitching muscles, unexplained fever, unusual agitation/restlessness.

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A very serious allergic reaction to this drug is rare. However, get medical help right away if you notice any symptoms of a serious allergic reaction, including: swollen lymph nodes, rash, itching/swelling (especially of the face/tongue/throat), severe dizziness, trouble breathing.

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history, especially of: heart disease, kidney disease, urinary problems (such as difficulty urinating), underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism), seizures, Parkinson's disease, leukemia, severe dehydration, any infection with high fever, a certain skin disorder (psoriasis).

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy or blur your vision. Alcohol or marijuana (cannabis) can make you more dizzy or drowsy. Do not drive, use machinery, or do anything that needs alertness or clear vision until you can do it safely. Limit alcoholic beverages. Talk to your doctor if you are using marijuana (cannabis).

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. You should not become pregnant while using lithium. Lithium may harm an unborn baby. However, since untreated mental/mood problems (such as bipolar disorder) can harm a pregnant woman and her unborn baby, do not stop taking this medication unless directed by your doctor. Instead, ask your doctor if a different medication would be right for you. If you are planning pregnancy, become pregnant, or think you may be pregnant, talk to your doctor right away about the risks and benefits of this medication.

Other medications can affect the removal of lithium from your body, which may affect how lithium works. Examples include ACE inhibitors (such as captopril, enalapril), ARBs (such as losartan, valsartan), NSAIDs (such as celecoxib, ibuprofen), "water pills" (diuretics such as hydrochlorothiazide, furosemide), other drugs for mental/mood conditions (such as chlorpromazine, haloperidol, thiothixene), among others. Your doctor may need to adjust your dose of lithium if you are on these medications.

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