

## Patient Education

### LITHIUM - ORAL

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The following information is intended to supplement, not substitute for, the expertise and judgment of your physician, pharmacist or other healthcare professional. It should not be construed to indicate that use of the drug is safe, appropriate, or effective for you. Consult your healthcare professional before using this drug.

#### LITHIUM - ORAL

(LITH-ee-um)

**COMMON BRAND NAME(S):** Eskalith, Lithobid, Lithonate, Lithotabs

**WARNING:** It is very important to have the right amount of lithium in your body because too much of it may lead to unwanted effects such as nausea, diarrhea, shaking of the hands, dizziness, twitching, seizures, slurred speech, confusion, or increased urination. Notify your doctor promptly if these effects occur.

The difference between the correct amount of lithium and too much, is small. Therefore, it is important you be monitored closely.

#### **USES:**

This medication is used to treat manic-depressive disorder (bipolar disorder). It works to stabilize the mood and reduces extremes in behavior.

#### **HOW TO USE:**

Take with food or milk or immediately after meals to prevent stomach upset.

This medication works best if the amount of the drug in your body is kept at a constant level. Do this by taking the medication at evenly spaced intervals throughout the day and night.

Drink 8-12 glasses of water or other fluid each day and maintain a regular diet while taking this medication. Do not change the amount of salt in your diet unless your doctor tells you to do so.

This medication must be taken as prescribed. Do not stop taking this drug suddenly without consulting your doctor. Some conditions may worsen if the medication is suddenly stopped.

#### **SIDE EFFECTS:**

May cause drowsiness, tiredness, increased thirst, increased frequency of urination, weight gain, and trembling of the hands. These should subside as your body adjusts to the medication. If these symptoms persist or become bothersome, inform your doctor.

Notify your doctor if you develop: diarrhea, vomiting, fever, unsteady walking, fainting, confusion, slurred speech, rapid heart rate, severe trembling of the hands.

If you notice other effects not listed above, contact your doctor or pharmacist.

#### **PRECAUTIONS:**

Tell your doctor your entire medical history especially if you have: leukemia, heart disease, kidney disease or other urinary problems, epilepsy, parkinsonism, severe dehydration (symptoms include strong and persistent thirst), infections accompanied with high fever, any allergies.

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy; use caution engaging in activities requiring alertness such as driving or using machinery. Limit alcoholic beverages.

This drug is not recommended for use during pregnancy especially during the first three months. Discuss the benefits and risks with your doctor.

Lithium is excreted into breast milk. In most cases, breast-feeding is not recommended while using this drug. Consult your doctor before breast-feeding.

#### **DRUG INTERACTIONS:**

Tell your doctor of any over-the-counter or prescription medication you are taking including: anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen, SSRI antidepressants (e.g., fluoxetine, fluvoxamine, paroxetine), other drugs for mental/mood conditions (e.g., phenothiazines such as chlorpromazine, thiothixene, or butyrophenones such as haloperidol), water pills.

Maintain a normal diet with an average consumption of sodium.

Avoid products that contain sodium (like sodium bicarbonate, an ingredient in certain antacids).

Do not start or stop any medicine without doctor or pharmacist approval.

#### **OVERDOSE:**

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately. US residents can call the US national poison hotline at 1-800-222-1222. Canadian residents should call their local poison control center directly. Symptoms of overdose may include diarrhea, vomiting, ringing in the ears, blurred vision, lack of coordination, unusual drowsiness, seizures, tremor, and loss of consciousness.

#### **NOTES:**

It may take several weeks before the full effects of this medication are noted.

Your doctor may perform lab tests periodically during treatment with this medication to check how it is working.

Do not change brands of this medication without checking with your doctor or pharmacist. Not all brands are identical.

#### **MISSED DOSE:**

If you miss a dose, take as soon as remembered unless the next scheduled dose is within 2 hours (or 6 hours for slow-release forms). If so, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not "double-up" the dose to catch up.

#### **STORAGE:**

Store at room temperature away from moisture and sunlight. Do not store in the bathroom. Do not freeze liquid forms.