

Lithium



What is it usually prescribed for?

Bipolar disorder and other conditions.



How does it work?

Lithium helps improve thinking, mood, and behavior. Lithium works by changing the release of chemicals in the brain.



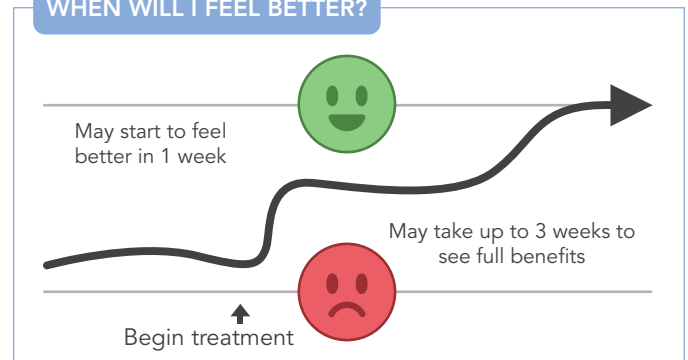
What should I expect?

Symptoms get better the longer you take lithium. Some symptoms may improve in 1 week. It may take up to several weeks for you to see the full benefits of lithium.

Your healthcare professional will start with a low dose that is slowly increased to find the best dose that works for you. Tell your healthcare professional about how it's working for you and if you have any side effects so the dose can be changed if needed.

Take lithium exactly as prescribed to get the full benefit of this medicine. Lithium blood levels and weight may be monitored periodically by your healthcare professional.

WHEN WILL I FEEL BETTER?



Will I have side effects?

You may or may not have side effects when taking lithium. Some side effects go away with time, but others require changes to the dose. The risk of some side effects increases with larger doses.

In most cases, treatment is necessary for a long time to control symptoms. Low levels of thyroid hormone and rare kidney problems have been linked to long-term use of lithium. Your healthcare professional will monitor your kidney function periodically.

What are common side effects and what can I do to feel better?

If your side effects are mild, talk to your healthcare professional about them at your next appointment.

	Drink less alcohol	Drink less caffeine	Drink plenty of water	Healthcare professional suggestion
Nausea or throwing up	X	X	X	
Diarrhea	X	X	X	
Increased thirst	X	X	X	
Feeling dizzy	X	X	X	
Feeling drowsy	X		X	
Dry mouth	X	X	X	

Note: This is not a complete list of side effects; other side effects are possible. Before starting lithium, tell your healthcare professional about all the medicines you are taking to avoid unexpected side effects.



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YOU'RE NOT ALONE!

In 2019, lithium was prescribed over 2.6 million times in the United States.

⊗ What should I avoid?

Don't start any new medicines, over-the-counter drugs, or herbal remedies without talking to your healthcare professional first. There are many interactions with medicines that may increase your chance of side effects.

Do not suddenly stop taking lithium unless your healthcare professional has told you to because your symptoms may return.

Use less alcohol and recreational drugs. They may decrease the benefits of lithium and increase the chance of side effects.

Avoid low sodium diets, dehydration, and high amounts of caffeine because they can cause changes in blood levels of lithium. Too much lithium can cause death.

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

- ✔ It may take up to several weeks for you to feel the full benefits of taking this medicine
- ✔ Tell your healthcare professional about any troubling side effects so that you can work together to address them
- ✔ Take exactly as prescribed and do not suddenly stop taking this medicine unless told to do so by a healthcare professional
- ✔ Do not start any new medicines, over-the-counter drugs, or herbal remedies without talking to your healthcare professional
- ✔ Get medical care right away if you have serious side effects

Avoid pregnancy while taking this medicine. Lithium may be associated with birth defects.



When should I call a healthcare professional right away or visit the emergency room?

If you have any **serious** side effects. Here are some examples of serious side effects:

- Muscle weakness, twitching, drowsiness, feeling lightheaded, mood changes, blurred vision, irregular heartbeats, confusion, trouble breathing, seizures (convulsions)
- Headache, confusion, slurred speech, severe weakness, vomiting, feeling unsteady
- Weight gain or loss, muscle pain, feeling hot or cold, changes in your skin or hair, sweating, fast or pounding heartbeats
- Feeling very thirsty or hot, being unable to urinate, heavy sweating, or hot and dry skin

If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center (800-222-1222) or get medical care right away.



Where can I get more help?

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) – nami.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line – Text "HELLO" to 741741



Notes and questions for my next appointment

