

Lithium Carbonate

Lithium Carbonate

250 mg Capsules

What is in this leaflet

Please read this leaflet carefully before you start taking Lithium Carbonate.

This leaflet answers some common questions about Lithium Carbonate Capsules. It does not contain all the available information. It does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules against the benefits they expect it will have for you.

If you have any concerns about taking this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Keep this leaflet with the medicine. You may need to read it again.

What Lithium Carbonate Capsules are used for

Lithium Carbonate Capsules are used to both treat and prevent:

- Mania - a mental illness characterised by abnormal excitability and instability.
- Depression - a mental illness characterised by feelings of severe sadness and unworthiness.
- Manic depression - a mental illness which alternates between attacks of mania and depression.

Your doctor may have prescribed Lithium Carbonate Capsules for another reason.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about why Lithium Carbonate has been prescribed for you.

This medicine is available only with a doctor's prescription.

Before you take Lithium Carbonate

When you must not take it

Do not take Lithium Carbonate if you have an allergy to:

- Any medicine containing lithium.
- Any of the ingredients listed at the end of this leaflet.

Some of the symptoms of an allergic reaction may include:

- Asthma, shortness of breath, wheezing.
- Swelling of the face, lips, or tongue which may lead to difficulty swallowing or breathing.
- Rash, itching or hives.
- Fainting.

Do not take Lithium Carbonate Capsules if:

- You are **taking other medicines**, including medicines that you buy without a prescription without telling your doctor or pharmacist.
- You have severe kidney disease.
- You have low levels of sodium in your body – e.g., if you are on a low salt diet.
- You have Addison's disease - a disease due to low activity of the adrenal glands.
- You have significant cardiovascular disease.
- You have untreated hypothyroidism.

Do not take this medicine if you are pregnant.

It may affect your developing baby if you take it during pregnancy.

Do not breastfeed if you are taking this medicine.

The active ingredient in Lithium Carbonate passes into breast milk and there is a possibility that your baby may be affected.

Do not give this medicine to a child under the age of 12 years. Safety and effectiveness in children younger than 12 years have not been established.

Do not take it after the expiry date (EXP) printed on the back. If you take it after the expiry date has passed, it may not work as well.

Do not take it if the packaging is torn or shows signs of tampering or if the capsules show visible signs of deterioration.

If you are not sure whether you should start taking Lithium Carbonate talk to your doctor.

Before you start to take it

The amount of lithium absorbed by your body is determined by individual characteristics and factors such as kidney function, diet, health status, other medication and the blood-testing regimen, which you will undergo periodically. It is important your doctor determines the right amount of lithium for you personally because the margin between the desired response for you and the toxic response is narrow.

High concentrations of lithium in your body may be lethal.

It is therefore important, that you **follow your doctor's instructions carefully** and you and your family are able to **recognise symptoms of lithium intoxication.**

Tell your doctor if:

1. You have allergies to:
 - Any other medicines, including any other substances, such as foods, preservatives or dyes.
2. You have, or have had, the following medical conditions:
 - Heart disease.
 - Kidney problems.

Poor kidney function impairs lithium excretion and may exacerbate heart problems. Your doctor

will discuss the risks and benefits of taking this medicine if you have these conditions.

3. You are pregnant:
 - Tell your doctor straight away.
 - Do not take Lithium Carbonate Capsules if you are pregnant, especially in the first 3 months of your pregnancy.

If your doctor decides that you should have Lithium Carbonate Capsules while you are pregnant, they will:

- Keep a close eye on the level of lithium in your blood. This is because your kidney works differently while you are pregnant.
 - Arrange for appropriate tests before your baby is born.
4. Intend or could become pregnant:
 - Talk to your doctor before taking this medicine. It is very important that you speak with your doctor about your treatment well before you become pregnant.
 - You should use an effective method of contraception while taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules
 5. You are breastfeeding or planning to breastfeed:
 - Do not breast-feed if you are taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules. It is known that Lithium Carbonate can pass into the mother's milk.

If you have not told your doctor about any of the above, tell them before you start using Lithium Carbonate.

It is not recommended Lithium Carbonate Capsules be taken during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

The infant may develop heart abnormalities and lithium intoxication.

Lithium is also present in breast milk. Do not breast feed your baby.

Your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of taking this medicine while you are pregnant.

There is no evidence this medicine is addictive.

Taking other medicines

Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines, including medicines that you buy without a prescription from your pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop. You should also tell any health professional who is prescribing a new medication for you that you are taking Lithium Carbonate.

Lithium Carbonate Capsules may interfere with how well other medicines work and vice versa.

Some medicines may cause an increase in the blood levels of lithium resulting in lithium toxicity, or decrease blood levels, making it not as effective for your condition.

Medicines that may increase lithium concentration include:

- Selective Serotonin Re-Uptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) - medicines used to treat depression.
- Metronidazole.
- Tetracyclines.
- Topiramate.
- Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) – Medicines used to alleviate pain, inflammation and fever.
- Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors – medicines used to treat high blood pressure and heart failure.
- Thiazide Diuretics - medicines that remove sodium from your body via urination.
- Spironolactone.
- Frusemide.
- Angiotensin-II Receptor Antagonists - medicines used to treat high blood pressure.
- Steroids.

Medicines that may decrease lithium concentration include:

- Xanthines such as theophylline and caffeine.
- Sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and sodium chloride (table salt).
- Psyllium or Ispaghula husk such as Metamucil and Mucilax.
- Urea and mannitol.

- Acetazolamide.
- Empagliflozin.
- Dapagliflozin.

Medicines that may cause nerve damage include:

- Neuroleptics - A type of sedative such as risperidone, clozapine, phenothiazines and haloperidol when used with Lithium Carbonate, may lead to, in rare cases, neurotoxicity giving symptoms such as confusion, disorientation, lethargy and tremor.
- SSRIs, sumatriptan and tricyclic antidepressants used with Lithium carbonate has been associated with neurotoxicity.
- Calcium Channel Blockers such as verapamil, diltiazem and enalapril - medicines used to treat heart problems and high blood pressure when used with Lithium Carbonate may lead to neurotoxicity giving symptoms such as ataxia, confusion and somnolence, which are reversible after discontinuation of the drug.
- Carbamazepine or phenytoin when used with Lithium carbonate may lead to dizziness, somnolence, confusion and cerebellar symptoms.
- Methyldopa.

Other medicines

- Neuromuscular Blocking Agents - medicines used to induce muscle paralysis.
- Thioridazine.
- Iodide.
- Baclofen.
- Cotrimoxazole.
- Aciclovir.
- Prostaglandin Synthetase Inhibitors - medicines used to treat inflammation and pain.

Your doctor or pharmacist has more information on medicines to be careful with or avoid while taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules.

How to take Lithium Carbonate

Follow all directions given to you by your doctor or pharmacist carefully. They may differ from the information contained in this leaflet.

How much to take

Your doctor will tell you how many Lithium Carbonate Capsules you should take each day. This depends on your condition, simultaneous use of other medicines and the results of the tests carried out by your doctor in order to determine the optimal response for you. It is not unusual for your doctor to alter the dose from time to time.

If you do not understand the instructions on the label, ask your doctor or pharmacist for help.

How to take it

Swallow the prescribed dose of capsules with some water. Lithium Carbonate Capsules may be taken before or after meals.

When to take it

You must take your dose at exactly the set times as prescribed by your doctor. This is necessary to keep the amount of lithium in your blood constant.

How long to take it

Lithium Carbonate Capsules are not a cure. To control mood swings you may need to take it for a long period of time.

If you forget to take it

Do not double the dose to make up for the one you missed. If it is less than 2 hours until your next dose, skip the dose you have missed but be sure to take the next dose when you are meant to.

If you are not sure what to do, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

If you have trouble remembering your dose, ask your pharmacist for some hints.

While you are taking Lithium Carbonate

Things you must do

Tell all doctors and pharmacists who are treating you that you are taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules.

Tell your doctor immediately if you become pregnant while taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules.

If you are about to have any blood tests, tell your doctor that you are taking this medicine. It may interfere with the results of some tests.

Tell your doctor if you feel Lithium Carbonate Capsules are not controlling your mood swings.

Be sure to keep all your appointments with your doctor so that your progress can be checked and blood tests can be conducted. Your dose of lithium has to be monitored along with blood concentrations of sodium. A reduction in sodium intake leads to retention of lithium while an increased sodium intake increases lithium excretion. You should avoid any form of diet, foods or medicines that may cause a marked change in sodium concentration. Sodium is found in common table salt and preserved foods. You should also be examined for abnormal thyroid (a gland situated in your neck) function.

Watch for symptoms of lithium intoxication.

Things you must not do

Do not stop taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules or change the dose without first checking with your doctor.

Do not let yourself run out of medicine over the weekend or on holidays.

Do not give Lithium Carbonate Capsules to anyone else even if they have the same condition as you.

Do not use Lithium Carbonate Capsules to treat other complaints unless your doctor says to.

Do not take any other medicines whether they require a prescription or not without first telling your doctor or consulting a pharmacist.

Things to be careful of

Lithium Carbonate Capsules may impair your ability to drive or use machinery. Care should be taken until you know how this medicine affects you.

In case of overdose

If you take too much (overdose)

Immediately telephone your doctor or the National Poisons Centre (telephone 0800 POISON or 0800 764 766) or go to accident and emergency at your nearest hospital, if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too much Lithium Carbonate.

Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning. You may need urgent medical attention.

The symptoms of overdose are reported to be mainly related to the digestive and nervous systems and include:

abdominal pain, loss of appetite and nausea, sickness, diarrhoea, blurred vision, passing a lot of water, lightheadedness, tremor, muscle twitching, muscle weakness or drowsiness and feeling very tired. In extreme cases unconsciousness, coma, fits, heart rhythm problems (slow or irregular heartbeat) and kidney failure can occur.

Side effects

Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are taking Lithium Carbonate.

You and your family must be able to recognise the symptoms of lithium intoxication. Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules.

All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes they are serious, most of the time they are not. You may need medical treatment if you get some of the adverse effects.

Do not be alarmed by this list of possible adverse effects. You may not experience any of them.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to answer any questions you may have.

Tell your doctor immediately if you notice any of the following:

- Lack of interest.
- Sluggishness.
- Drowsiness.
- Tiredness.
- Reduced concentration.
- Weak muscles.
- Unsteady walking.
- Tremors.
- muscle twitchings
- Sleepiness.
- Speech difficulty.
- Rigid posture.
- Aching body.
- Dry mouth.
- Blurred vision.
- Ringing in the ears.
- Indigestion.
- Constipation.
- Weight gain.
- Swelling.
- Acne.
- Itchy skin and rash.
- Metallic taste.
- Flushing.
- Stuffy nose.

- Headache.
- Enlarged thyroid gland.
- change in heart rate, for example a faster, slower or irregular heartbeat.
- Kidney problems, for example, passing a lot of urine, feeling thirsty and swollen ankles.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhoea.
- Abdominal pain.

These are mild to moderate side effects of lithium intoxication.

Memory impairment may occur during long term use.

Severe adverse effects may be fatal and require hospitalisation. Seek medical treatment immediately. Symptoms are:

- Ill looking, pinched, drawn, grey and cold.
- Impaired consciousness.
- Enhanced reflexes.
- Convulsions and epileptic seizures.
- Shortness of breath.

Lithium poisoning has been associated with permanent kidney, heart, brain and nervous system damage.

If any of the following happen, stop taking Lithium Carbonate and tell your doctor immediately, or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital:

- Swelling of the face, lips, mouth or throat which may cause difficulty in swallowing or breathing.
- Hives.
- Fainting.

These are very serious side effects. If you have them, you may have had a serious allergic reaction to Lithium Carbonate. You may need urgent medical attention or hospitalisation. These side effects are very rare.

These may be serious side effects of Lithium Carbonate. You may need urgent medical attention. Serious side effects are uncommon.

Tell your doctor if you notice any other effects. Other adverse effects not listed above may also occur in some patients.

After taking Lithium Carbonate

Storage

Keep your Lithium Carbonate Capsules in the original container and protect from light and moisture until it is time to take them.

If you take the medicine out of its container, it may not keep well.

Keep Lithium Carbonate Capsules in a cool dry place where the temperature stays below 30°C.

Do not store it, or any other medicine, in a bathroom or near a sink.

Do not leave it in the car or on windowsills. Heat and dampness can destroy some medicines.

Keep Lithium Carbonate Capsules where children cannot reach them.

A locked cupboard at least one-and-a-half metres above the ground is a good place to store medicines.

Disposal

If your doctor tells you to stop taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules, or the medicine has passed its expiry date, **ask your pharmacist what to do with any capsules left over.**

Product description

What it looks like

250 mg capsule: a size one capsule having a green cap and clear body filled with a white powder. It comes in plastic bottles containing 100 capsules.

Ingredients

Active ingredient(s):

Each Lithium Carbonate capsule contains 250 mg of lithium carbonate.

Inactive ingredients:

Lithium Carbonate Capsules contain lactose monohydrate, maize starch, magnesium stearate, gelatin, EEC Quinoline Yellow E104, FD&C Blue #1 E133 and FD&C Yellow # E110

Sponsor details

Lithium Carbonate is supplied in New Zealand by:

Douglas Pharmaceuticals Ltd

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New Zealand

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