

Consumer Medicine Information

Lithium Carbonate

Lithium Carbonate 250 mg Capsules

What is in this leaflet

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 and pharmacist.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you taking Lithium Carbonate Capsules against the benefits this medicine is expected to 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 it is used for

Lithium Carbonate is 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 Capsules have been prescribed for you.

Lithium Carbonate Capsules are a prescription only medicine.

Before you take Lithium Carbonate Capsules

When you must not take it

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

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

Symptoms of an allergic reaction to Lithium Carbonate Capsules 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
- have severe kidney disease
- have low levels of sodium in your body - eg. if you are on a low salt diet
- have Addison's disease - a disease due to low activity of the adrenal glands

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

Do not take Lithium Carbonate Capsules after the expiry date (EXP) printed on the pack.

If you take this medicine after the expiry date has passed, it may not work as well.

Before you start taking 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 or pharmacist if you are allergic to any other medicines, foods, dyes or preservatives.

Taking any substances containing lithium should be avoided if you have heart disease or kidney problems, unless absolutely essential.

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.

You must take your dose at exactly the set times and do not double the dose of lithium if you forget to take it.

It is important you attend all appointments to see your doctor. 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.

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

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.

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

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 and pharmacist may have more information on medicines to be careful with or avoid while taking this medicine.

How it is taken

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.

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 it

Things you must do

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

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

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.

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.

Side effects

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.

Lithium Carbonate Capsules help most people but they may have unwanted side effects.

All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes they are serious. You may need medical treatment if you get some of the side effects.

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

These are mild to moderate side effects of lithium intoxication.

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.

Do not be alarmed by the number of adverse effects. You may only experience a few of them.

Overdose

Immediately telephone your doctor or National Poisons Information Centre (New Zealand: telephone 0800 POISON or 0800 764 766) for advice or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency Department if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too many Lithium Carbonate Capsules. Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning.

Storage

Keep your Lithium Carbonate Capsules in the original container and protect from light 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 window sills.

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.

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.

Other ingredients

Lactose, Maize cornflour and Magnesium stearate.

Sponsor

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