

# Lithium (Eskalith<sup>®</sup>, Lithobid<sup>®</sup>)

## ALAMEDA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

**Client's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Initial Medication Instructions** \_\_\_\_\_

**What does this medication help to treat?**

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Bipolar disorder or other conditions<br><input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings or fluctuations in mood<br><input type="checkbox"/> Agitation, aggression, or hostility<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration, rapid thoughts<br><input type="checkbox"/> Excessive behavior (e.g. spending, gambling, sex)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Irritability | <input type="checkbox"/> Depressive symptoms<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue or insomnia<br><input type="checkbox"/> Loss of interest in pleasurable activities<br><input type="checkbox"/> Social withdrawal<br><input type="checkbox"/> Decreased energy or activity<br><input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming feelings of sadness<br>Lithium is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your prescriber for more information. |
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**Blood Level Monitoring**

- An advantage of lithium is that your prescriber can check blood levels to find the right dose of lithium to work the best with the least risk of unwanted side effects.
- Your blood level should be: **0.6-1.5 mEq/L** (sometimes lower or higher levels are needed as determined by your prescriber).
- This medication has been shown to cause birth defects in women taking it during pregnancy. Discuss the benefits vs. risks of lithium therapy with your prescriber if you are pregnant or have plans to become pregnant.

**Other Information**

- You should start to notice some benefits of this medication within 1 to 2 weeks after initiation of therapy. Some individuals will experience these benefits earlier and some later than the stated period of time. If you have not experienced benefit after one month of treatment at the prescribed dose, contact your prescriber.
- The slow-release tablet must be swallowed whole. Do not chew or crush it.
- Limit the consumption of beverages that contain caffeine, such as chocolate milk, tea, coffee, or cola. Excessive caffeine intake of more than 2 cups of coffee, tea, or soda a day may lead to anxiety, insomnia, and may decrease the effectiveness of lithium.

### Side Effects and Management

**Common (greater than 10 in 100 clients on this medication)**

Nausea and Vomiting	Try taking lithium with food. Contact your prescriber.
Diarrhea	Be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Contact your prescriber.
Mental Clouding (slower thinking; difficulty concentrating)	Consult your prescriber to consider decreasing your dose.
Hand Tremor	Consult your prescriber to consider taking the slow-release dosage form or your prescriber can give you a medicine to treat the tremor.
Increased Thirst, Increased Urination	Ask your prescriber about taking all of your dose nightly.
Muscle Weakness and Lethargy	Consult your prescriber if this side effect occurs. It will usually go away within a few days to weeks.
Weight Gain	Avoid foods high in fat and sugar. Eat balanced meals and maintain an active lifestyle.

**Uncommon (~1 to 10 in 100 clients on this medication)**

Low thyroid hormone levels (fatigue, weakness, low energy level, feeling cold)	Consult your prescriber to discuss the need for thyroid hormone replacement therapy.
Skin rash (acne)	Talk with your prescriber about proper skin care.

**Rare (less than 1 in 100 clients on this medication)**

Call your prescriber immediately if you experience any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Slow heart rate</li> <li>▪ Seizures or convulsions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Toxicity (strong hand tremor, diarrhea, confusion, slurred speech, loss of coordination, unsteady walking, slowness, vomiting)</li> </ul> <small>**References: Clinical Pharmacology, LexiComp 2011**</small>
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NOTE: This information is not intended to cover all possible uses, precautions, interactions, or adverse effects for this medication. If you have further questions about the medications you are taking, check with your healthcare professional.