

Taking Lithium: Your Daily Safety Guide

Mental Health • Anxiety & Mood Disorders

Lithium evens out the mood swings of bipolar disorder. The right amount helps, but too much is harmful, so blood tests and steady daily habits keep you safe.

Keep your blood tests

- Blood tests check your lithium level, kidneys, and thyroid.
- Have the lithium test 12 hours after your last dose. On test days, take your morning dose after the test.
- Your level goal: _____. Next test: _____.

Keep salt and fluids steady

- Drink about 8 to 12 cups (2 to 3 liters) of fluid a day, unless your provider gives you a limit.
- Eat your usual amount of salt. **Do not start a low-salt diet without asking.**
- Drink extra fluids in hot weather, during hard exercise, or with a fever.
- Call if you have vomiting or diarrhea.

Take it the right way

- Take lithium with food at the same times each day.
- A slight hand shake, thirst, and passing more urine are common.
- Do not stop it on your own.

Ask before other medicines

- Do not take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve). They raise your lithium level.

- Ask before starting water pills or blood pressure medicines.
- Keep coffee, tea, and cola about the same each day.

Plan ahead for pregnancy

- Talk with your provider before you try to get pregnant. Lithium raises the risk of heart problems in the baby.

Call your provider today if you have

- Diarrhea, vomiting, or a hand shake that gets worse: **skip your next dose and call**
- Feeling very sleepy or weak
- Much more thirst or urine than usual
- A possible pregnancy

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Confusion or trouble staying awake
- Trouble walking or poor balance
- Slurred speech
- A seizure or fainting

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/lithium-safety/patient

© 2026 NCLEXPace.