



Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network

1660 Oak Street SE, Suite 230 ■ Salem, Oregon ■ 97301

PHONE: (503) 361-2647 ■ FAX: (503) 585-4989 ■ www.mvbcn.org

Lithium

The medication **Lithium** is a mood stabilizer. It is used to treat mood swings- high and lows- which are substantial enough to result in life interference. There may be other reasons someone takes Lithium.

Lithium is FDA approved for the treatment of Bipolar Affective Disorder, acute and maintenance phases.

Although Lithium can be very helpful, it can cause some side effects that you should know of before accepting treatment with it. These include: **nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; increased urination and thirst; tremor, weakness or dizziness; and skin rashes or acne.** These side effects most often occur with initial treatment with Lithium and will generally go away or can be managed. Yet sometimes they do not and require talking with your provider, who may stop the medication.

More significant effects can occur with chronic use which includes hypothyroidism and kidney problems. **Many of these side effects occur rarely.** Also Lithium is a medication you do not want to take if you have recently become pregnant. Tell your doctor if you suspect you may be pregnant.

Lithium is a medication, which can be monitored with blood draws. Your provider may wish to check your blood level periodically especially if you are having side effects or are not finding it to be helpful. The beneficial effect of Lithium can sometimes take 10-14 days to be appreciated, and sometimes longer. Generally if no effect is felt after 6 weeks, then either your blood level needs to be checked or a different medication tried. The usual dosage is between 900-1500 mg/day.

Lithium is generally safe with other medications. But as with all medications, please let your provider know if you are engaged in other treatments. There are no dietary restrictions with

Lithium, but it is excreted out of your body by your kidneys, so you want to make sure you are drinking a normal amount of water, especially on those hot days.

Of course there are supplemental ways to improve mood which include:

- exercise
- good sleep habits
- good eating habits
- yoga
- a hobby
- visiting with family or friends

If you have further questions about this medication, please ask your medical provider or your pharmacist.

Original:	08/2011	Last reviewed:	06/2012				
		Last revised:	08/2011				