The Child Taking Lithium

Thank you for choosing the Children’s Medical Center at the Medical College of Georgia Hospitals and Clinics for your child’s health care needs. This information is to help answer some of the questions you may have about the medication your child is receiving. If you have any other questions, please ask your child’s doctor or nurse.

My child’s medication is ____________________________________________________________________

Directions: ____________________________________________________________________________

What is Lithium?

Lithium is a naturally occurring salt that is available in several different forms, including lithium carbonate tablets or capsules, controlled-release (Eskalith CR or Lithobid), and lithium citrate syrup.

How can this medicine help?

Lithium can decrease mood swings and improve behavior. It may be prescribed for manic depressive (bipolar) disorder, certain types of depression, severe mood swings, or aggression.

How will the doctor monitor this medicine?

Before starting the lithium:

Recent completed medical history and physical
Blood and urine tests
Sometimes a heart test - EKG (electrocardiogram) or brain wave test - EEG
What side effects can this medicine have?

Any medication may have side effects, including allergy to the medicine. Because each patient is different, your doctor will work with your child to get the most positive effects and the fewest negative effects from the medication. Please talk to the doctor if you suspect the medicine is causing a problem. The following is a partial list of possible side effects and may not include rare or unusual ones.

The side effects of lithium are increased if a person is dehydrated (not enough fluid). If side effects appear, try giving your child one or two glasses of water.

The following side effects are common, and frequently go away after two weeks or so. If they are troublesome, ask the doctor about lowering the dose of lithium. Lithium should always be taken with food, to decrease side effects. Soft drinks with caffeine may make side effects worse.

**Common nuisance side effects**

$ Weight gain  $ Increased thirst
$ Stomach ache $ Increased frequency of urination
$ Diarrhea   $ Fine hand tremor
$ Nausea     $ Tiredness, weakness, dizziness
$ Vomiting   $ Headache

**Occasional side effects**

$ Low thyroid function or goiter (enlarged thyroid)
$ Acne
$ Skin rashes
$ Hair loss
$ Changes in blood sugar
$ Metallic taste in the mouth
$ Irritability

**Uncommon but potentially serious side effects. Stop the lithium and call the doctor.**

$ Seizures
$ Confusion
ROOM IMMEDIATELY.

$ Irregular heart beat
$ Fainting
$ Staggering
$ Blurred vision
$ Ringing or buzzing sound in the ears

$ No urination
$ Muscle twitches
$ High fever
$ Convulsions
$ Unconsciousness

**What could happen if this medicine is stopped suddenly?**

There are no ill effects, other than loss of the beneficial effect.

**What else should I know about this medicine?**

Be sure your child drinks plenty of fluids, especially in hot weather and when exercising. Avoid extreme changes in the amount of salt eaten, such as large amounts of salty food or a salt-free diet. Stop the lithium and call the doctor if your child develops an illness with vomiting, diarrhea, fever, or loss of appetite.

Some anti-inflammatory medications can increase lithium levels. Do not give any of the following until you discuss it with your child and doctor:

- Advil
- Alevo (naproxen)
- Medipren
- Actron (Keprofen)
- Midol
- Ponstel (mefenamic acid)
- Motrin
- Feldene (piroxicam)
- Nuprin (ibuprofen)
$ Orudisk + R (Ketoprofen) $ Naprosyn (naproxen)

Lithium may cause birth defects if taken during the first 3 months of pregnancy. Talk to your doctor if you suspect your child is pregnant, or thinking about becoming pregnant.

Questions/Problems:

If you need to talk to your child’s doctor you can call:

(706) 721-____ and ask to speak to your child’s physician or the ___________________________ physician on call.