

# Lithium

Medication Information Leaflet

## What is this medication for?

Lithium is used as a mood stabilizer to help reduce mood swings in bipolar disorder. It may also be used in the treatment of depression (low mood) or other conditions. Check with your healthcare professional if you are unsure why you are given this medication.

## How should I take/use this medication?

- Follow the instructions on your medication label and take this medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- This medication should be taken with or after food to reduce stomach discomfort.
- The controlled-release (CR) tablet must be swallowed whole or halved; do not crush or chew it. Do not change the brand of this medication you are taking without informing your doctor.
- This medication needs to be taken regularly for a few weeks before you feel its full benefits. You should not stop taking this medication even if you do not feel better at the beginning. Continue to take this medication even after you feel better to prevent your symptoms from returning.
- Do check with your doctor on how long you will have to be on this medication.
- Do not stop taking your medication without checking with your healthcare professional.

## What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose. Then take the next dose at your usual timing. Do not take two doses to make up for the missed dose.

## What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients of this medication
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding. If you are pregnant and/or breastfeeding, your doctor would have discussed the potential benefits and side-effects with you and should you have further questions or concerns, do consult your doctor.
- You are taking any other medications including over-the-counter medications, supplements, traditional Chinese medicine and herbal remedies. Some of them may affect how this medication works or cause serious drug interactions.
- You intend to start on a low salt diet as it may affect the way this medication works.
- You have or have ever had:
  - Other drug allergies
  - Medical conditions such as:
    - Leukaemia, Psoriasis, Myasthenia Gravis (an autoimmune condition that affects the nerves and muscles), heart, kidney or thyroid disease
    - High or low blood pressure or low sodium levels (symptoms may include confusion, headache, nausea, vomiting, tiredness and cramps)

**It is important to remain well hydrated while you are taking this medication. Drinking too much or too little water can affect the amount of Lithium in your body and may result in unpleasant effects.**

- Drink plenty of water when you exercise, especially in hot weather.
- If you have an infection or illness that causes heavy sweating, vomiting or diarrhoea, consult a doctor and continue to drink plenty of water.
- Keep all appointments with your doctor. Your doctor may order blood tests to make sure the amount of Lithium in your body is just right.

## What are some common side-effects of this medication?

The mentioned side effects generally affect up to 10% of patients.

- Nausea, vomiting
  - Take this medication with or after food
  - Take simple meals and avoid rich or spicy foods
- Thirst, dry mouth
  - Chew sugar-free gum, suck on sugar-free hard candies or ice chips, sip water regularly
- Diarrhoea
  - Drink plenty of water to replace the loss of fluids
- Headache
  - Speak to your doctor if it becomes bothersome
- Fine hand movements that are difficult to control; joint or muscle pain
  - Speak to your doctor if it affects your daily life
- Feeling tired or drowsy
  - Discuss with your doctor if you can take this medication at a different time of the day
  - Avoid driving or engaging in activities requiring concentration
- Loss of appetite, bloating or stomach pain
  - Speak to your doctor if it becomes bothersome
- Weight gain

Most of the side effects listed here will improve with time. Speak to your doctor if they continue, get worse or are affecting your daily life.

## **What are some rare but serious side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?**

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If the amount of Lithium in your body is too high, you may experience:

- Blurred vision
- Feeling sick, severe diarrhoea or vomiting
- Muscle weakness
- Confusion, clumsiness, dizziness, extreme tiredness, feeling shaky

Consult your healthcare professional immediately for advice if you experience any of these symptoms.

Rarely this medication may cause:

- Ringing in the ears (symptoms of tinnitus)
- Seizures (fits)
- Urinating more often
- Irregular heart beat

If you experience any of these side effects, you should stop your medication and inform your healthcare professional immediately.

Please also take note that not all possible side effects are listed above. If you have any concerns about your medication, please consult your doctor or pharmacist.

## **What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?**

Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this medication as it can cause excessive drowsiness.

## **How should I store this medication?**

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children.

# How should I throw away this medication safely?

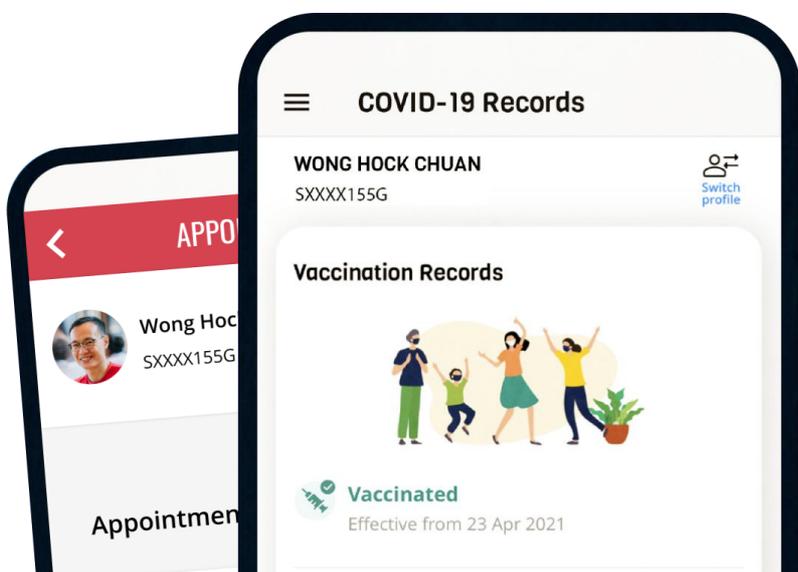
Pack this medication into a trash bag and seal it tightly before throwing into the rubbish chute or bin.

## Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

*This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.*

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The image displays two overlapping smartphone screens. The foreground screen shows the 'COVID-19 Records' section of the HealthHub app. At the top, it says 'COVID-19 Records' with a hamburger menu icon on the left and a 'Switch profile' icon on the right. Below this, the user's name 'WONG HOCK CHUAN' and ID 'SXXXX155G' are displayed. The main section is titled 'Vaccination Records' and features an illustration of a family celebrating. A green checkmark icon is next to the word 'Vaccinated', with the text 'Effective from 23 Apr 2021' below it. The background screen shows a profile page for 'Wong Hock Chuan' with a red header and the word 'Appointment' at the bottom.

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