



# Let's talk about medication safety

## Lithium



### Administering the medication



- Lithium can be prescribed for mania (overactive in energy, mood or behaviour); hypo-mania (like mania, but less severe); depression; bipolar disorder – sometimes feeling very high (mania), and sometimes very low (depression); and aggressive or self-harming behaviour
- Lithium is prescribed in tablet and liquid formulations. Brand names you may be familiar with include Priadel®, Camcolit® and Liskonum®. It is important that the person you are caring for has the same brand/formulation all of the time. **Never switch.**
- Information on how to administer the medication will be printed on the label of the container and should correspond to the dose written on the medication administration record.



### Special precautions

- Regular blood tests are important to monitor how much lithium is in the blood. The results of these tests should be noted in the resident's lithium 'Record Book'.
- Residents who are taking lithium will have a lithium alert card.
- Doctors and pharmacists prescribing new medicines for the resident will need to know that the resident is taking lithium. The resident should have their lithium alert card with them at all times.
- Tell the resident's GP if they start eating or drinking very different amounts or types of food or drink. If the resident becomes dehydrated or has a low-salt diet, the lithium levels in their blood may rise to high levels.
- For more information about the safe use of lithium read the resident's lithium 'Record Book'.



### What you need to do if a dose has been missed

- For a resident taking tablets: If it is less than 6 hours since the resident's last dose, give the dose as soon as you remember. If it is more than 6 hours, skip the missed dose and give the next one at the usual time.
- For a resident taking lithium liquid: Skip the missed dose and give the next one at the usual time.
- Never give 2 doses at the same time.
- Never give an extra dose to make up for a forgotten one.



### What should you do if a resident becomes unwell

People taking lithium can become ill if the lithium levels in their blood are too high. This could be for several reasons including:

- interactions with other medications
- interactions with certain foods
- taking the wrong dose

Lithium toxicity can cause serious harm if not treated straight away. It is important the resident seeks advice from the local Accident and Emergency department immediately if they have any of the following symptoms: **blackouts, stomach pains, fatigue, tremors, weakness, agitation, slurred speech, confusion, blurred vision, feeling very thirsty, needing to pee more than normal, lack of control over pee or poo, feeling lightheaded, diarrhoea and vomiting.**

If you have any medicines-related questions please contact

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