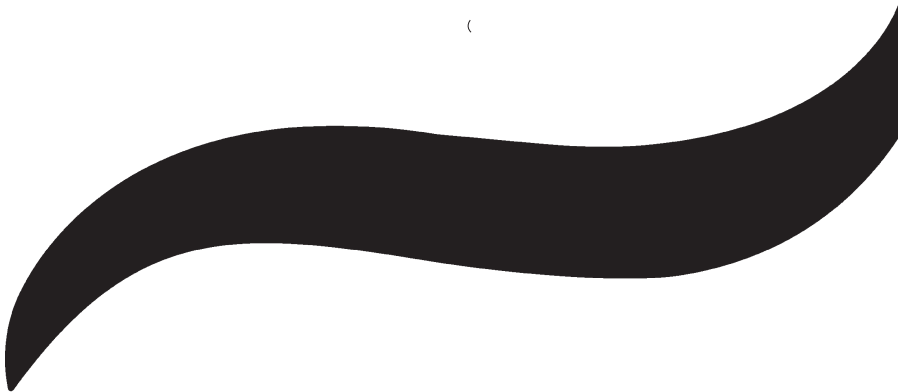




# Lithium in hot weather

Information for patients



## DEAR PATIENT

With summer coming and with the days getting longer and warmer, it is important to protect yourself from the summer heat. You can lose fluid quickly through sweat in hot weather. This can cause lithium levels to rise leading to side effects.

### Signs of dehydration (water loss):

- ❖ Feeling dizzy or light headed
- ❖ Dry mouth, lips, eyes
- ❖ Feeling thirsty
- ❖ Darker colour or strong smelling urine
- ❖ Peeing less frequently

If you lose too much water your lithium level can become high.

### Signs of a high lithium level:

- ❖ Shaking hands ("tremor")
- ❖ Nausea (feeling sick) or stomach aches
- ❖ Diarrhoea
- ❖ Muscle weakness or feeling unsteady on your feet
- ❖ Feeling muddled
- ❖ Slurred speech
- ❖ Confusion, fuzzy eyesight, feeling sleepy
- ❖ Muscle twitching

### If you are concerned that you have lithium toxicity

Urgently contact your Community Mental Health Team in office hours.

Out of hours go to A&E to get your bloods checked and for further guidance.

You can contact your CMHT on .....

- ❖ Loosen and remove outer clothing
- ❖ Move to a cool place
- ❖ Use cold compresses or cool showers
- ❖ Rest

To avoid dehydration or heatstroke, it is important to remain cool during the hotter weather.

### Important advice for hot weather:

- ❖ If you feel thirsty or dry, **drink fluids!**
  - ◆ Water is always best!
  - ◆ Sugary drinks may cause weight gain.
  - ◆ A change in caffeine intake (eg: from tea/coffee) can change lithium levels.
- ❖ Avoid exercising or doing too much during the hotter parts of the day.
  - ◆ Be sure to bring enough water with you when you're out during the day. You may need more if you're planning on walking around/running/playing sports.
- ❖ Apply sunscreen.

- ❖ Go to cooler/shaded areas during the day, open the windows and pull down blinds.
- ❖ Dress in loose, breathable, light-coloured clothing.
- ❖ Ensure you monitor and limit alcohol intake in hot weather.
  - ◆ Alcohol can dehydrate you and raise lithium levels.
- ❖ Try not to change the amount of salt you eat. Inform your mental health team if you wish to reduce your salt intake.

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