LITHIUM: SYMPTOMS OF TOXICITY

Patient Education Handout

SYMPTOMS
Please call your child’s doctors (both your pediatrician AND your child’s psychiatrist) if you notice the following symptoms. These symptoms may or may not be associated with too much lithium, but it is very important to give specific information to the doctors, and the get feedback about what to do:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Shakiness (or increased shakiness if your child already has a tremor)
- Unsteadiness when your child walks or sits
- Confusion
- Vision changes (blurriness or decreased peripheral vision for example)
- Sleepiness
- Hallucinations (such as seeing or hearing things that aren’t there)
- Seizures

ALWAYS call your doctors if your child has trouble speaking (such as articulating sounds) and/or complains of a numb or funny-feeling tongue, even if none of the other symptoms are present.

SOME QUESTIONS YOUR DOCTORS MIGHT ASK:

- Has your child taken a pain pill, such as Advil, Motrin, or ibuprofen? *Patients taking lithium should only use Tylenol as an over-the-counter pain medication because the medications listed above can cause the lithium level to rise.*
- Has your child had the stomach flu with vomiting, diarrhea, or decreased fluid intake? *Even mild dehydration can cause the lithium level to rise.*
- Has the amount of salt in your child’s diet changed radically for some reason? *Changes in the amount of salt in your child’s diet can change your child’s lithium level.*

HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU MAY BE ASKED TO DO BY THE DOCTOR:

- Check to see if your child got into the bottle of lithium pills and took too many.
- Stop the lithium
- Get a lithium level right away
- Come in to see the doctor right away
- Once a lithium level is done, your doctors will give you instructions on how to restart the medication, if needed

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION: