

A brief guide on Mood Stabilizers

There are several classes of mood stabilizers. These classes are categories based on their side effects and are often prescribed by psychiatrist based on the suitability of reaction with patients.

Generic Names and Side Effects

Lithium Carbonate

Lithium is effective in treatment of the acute manic phase of bipolar disorder and for depression for individuals who are not responding to antidepressants. Signs of improvement start to emerge seven to ten days after first dosage. Therefore, to see effects, lithium should be taken consistently.

Side Effects

- Weight gain
- Fine tremor
- Gastric disturbance
- Cognitive impairment (“Fuzzy thinking”)

Precaution

- Routine blood monitoring is required because lithium can affect kidney functions and thyroid functions. Therefore, blood monitoring can help make sure lithium is at the optimal level.
- Care should be taken to maintain the salt and fluid balance.

Carbamazepine

Carbamazepine is used in bipolar disorder treatment when lithium is not suitable. This drug targets the acute manic phase of bipolar disorder. Often, carbamazepine treatment is introduced to patients who are on antidepressants to prevent antidepressant-induced manic episodes or rapid cycling.

Side Effects

- Drowsiness, sedation
- Double vision
- Nausea, vomiting
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Dizziness, headache

Precaution

- Under treatment, care should be taken when driving or operating machinery as individual's reaction times may be slowed. In addition, when combined with other sedative drugs, including alcohol, the combination can be additive.

Sodium Valproate

Apart from treating mood episodes in bipolar disorders, Sodium Valproate is helpful in patients with aggressive or impulsive behaviors. This drug may also be helpful in reducing symptoms of impulsivity and affective instability.

Side Effects

- Sedation
- Dizziness, nausea
- Weight gain, appetite stimulation
- Thinning of hair
- Swelling of lower extremities (Ankle)

Precaution

Under treatment, care should be taken when driving or operating machinery as individual's reaction times may be slowed.

Do not mix western medication with traditional Chinese medication.

The information provided serves as psycho-education and not a guide for self-medication. The information contained herein is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, warnings, drug interactions, allergic reactions, or adverse effects. Please consult your psychiatrist before taking any medication.



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