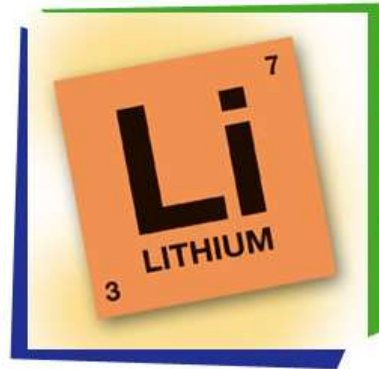


# Lithium



**The Misunderstood Mineral**

**Lithium's story begins 15 billion years ago. It was the third element to enter the universe**





**Later, ancient Romans and Native Americans recognized the healing properties of lithium spring water.**



Our great-grandparents did too, flocking to health spas to drink lithium water and bottling it in products like this one from Lithia Springs, Georgia.

# Medical Lithium



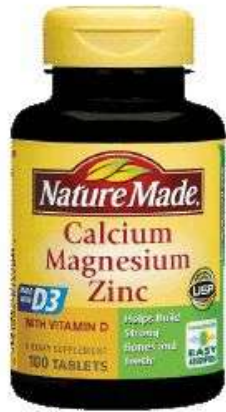
All that changed in the 1950's, when lithium's benefits in mania and depression were first discovered and it became regulated as a medicine.

# Stigma

Sadly, people started looking on lithium differently once it gained a reputation as a psychiatric medicine. Knowledge about its health benefits got lost.

As a mineral, drug companies could not copyright lithium, so they did not invest money to help spread the word about this remarkable therapy.





# Stigma

That's not the case for other minerals that people commonly take, like zinc and magnesium, which also help sleep, depression, and bipolar, though not as well as lithium does.



So we probably won't see products like this anymore...

(It's called 7up because 7 is the molecular weight of lithium)



But things haven't changed much.

Today's grocery stores are filled with another natural compound that improves bipolar, depression, and general health....

### Omega-3 fatty acids



Read more at [www.moodtreatmentcenter.com/omega3.pdf](http://www.moodtreatmentcenter.com/omega3.pdf)

# Medical Health

Let's look at some of lithium's health benefits, many of which have been recently discovered:

**Lower rates** of stroke, heart attacks, cancer, and neurologic illness. Relieves cluster headaches and menstrual cramps.

**Improved immunity.** People on lithium have fewer colds and better recovery from viruses like HIV and hepatitis.

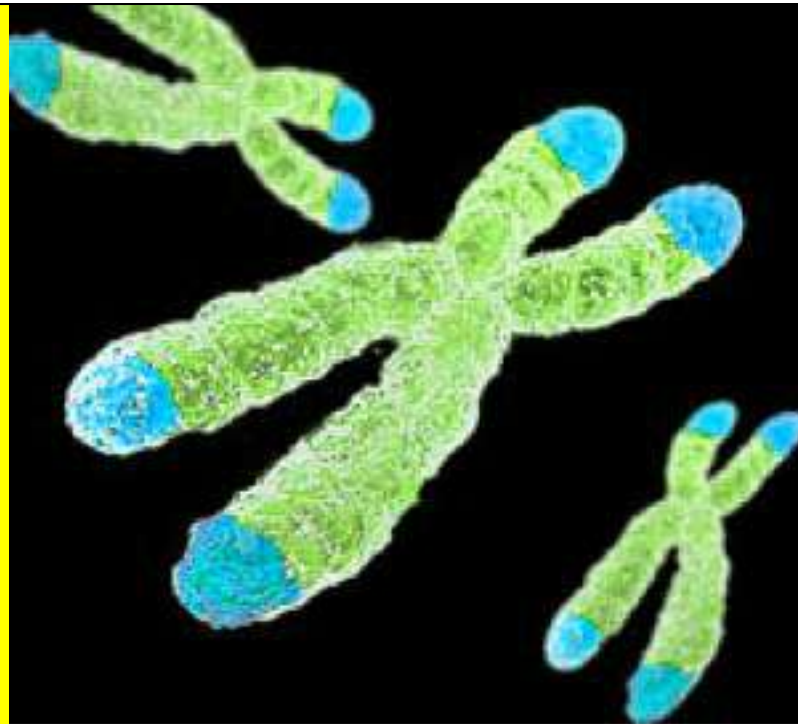


## Anti-Aging Effects

As we age, the ends of our genes crumble a bit (called telomeres).

Lithium reduces this aging effect.

This crumbling of the genes is also a cause of cancer. People who took lithium had 30% lower rates of all cancers.



# Dementia

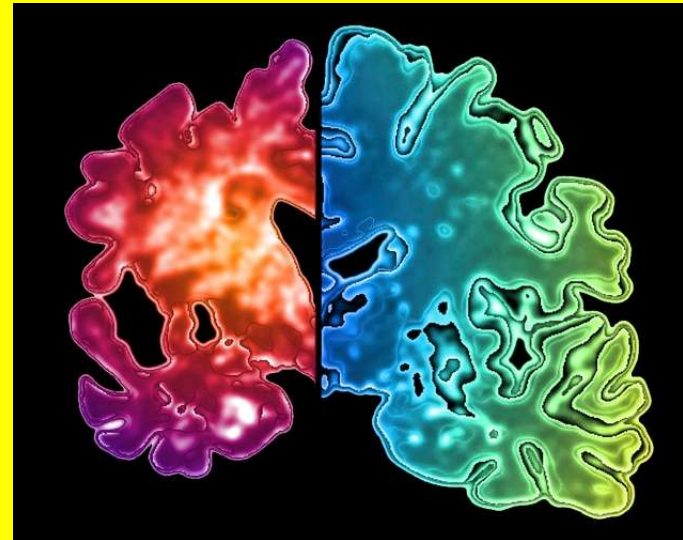
A low dose of lithium prevents dementia and improves age-related cognitive decline.



# Brain Health

Lithium improves brain growth, reversing the shrinkage of brain cells that depression can cause.

While other medicines do this as well, lithium's effects are more powerful than those of any other medication.

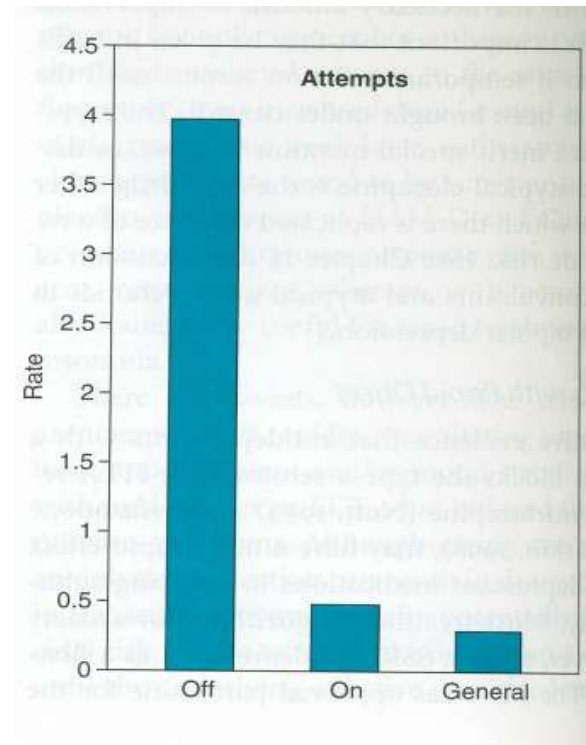


# Suicide

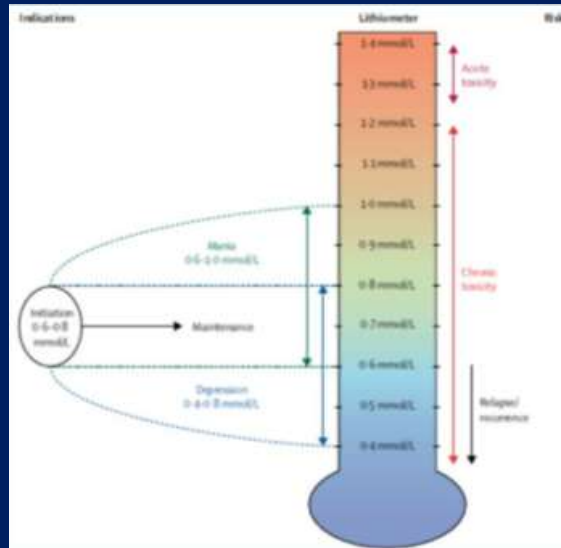
While most psychiatric medications have a warning that they can cause suicidal thinking, lithium actually prevents suicide.

The rate of suicide at right is markedly high in people with mood disorders. In those taking lithium, their suicide risk is almost the same as that in the general population (data from 100,000 people).

Lithium also improves suicidal thinking.



# Lithium: 4 levels



Unlike most medicines that are dosed by tablet size, lithium's level can be carefully monitored in the body. Lithium acts very differently at each level:

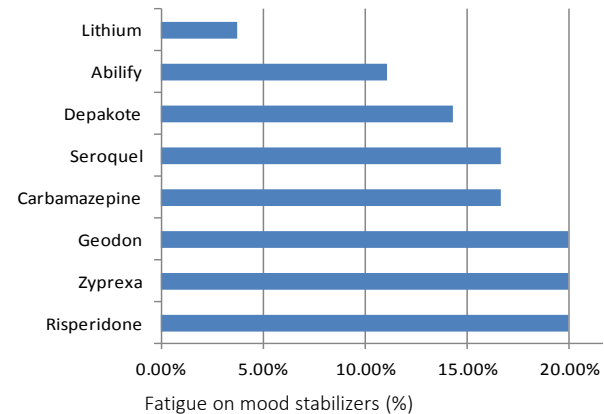
1. **Low** (0.1-0.4): Preventative health benefits.
2. **Medium** (0.4-0.8): Treats depression and prevents mood problems.
3. **High** (0.8-1.2): Treats mania.
4. **Toxic** (above 1.2): Causes difficulty walking, severe nausea, and severe tremor.

# Tolerability

**Lithium is usually well tolerated**, and most side effects are easily managed (usually by lowering the dose, raising it slowly, and using a controlled-release version).

**Most common:** Tremor, thirst, nausea.

About 10% of people don't tolerate lithium and stop it.



Compared to other mood stabilizer, lithium rarely makes people drowsy (only 1:28 chance vs. 1:5 for most others). It also compares favorably in terms of weight gain and cognitive effects.



# Risks

## **Slowing of kidney function**

Low but serious risk. Can be prevented by monitoring labs, using lower doses, and taking it all at night. Lithium won't harm the liver.

## **Lower thyroid function**

More common (1 in 10 chance if taken for lifetime). Easy to treat with thyroid supplement.



# Risks

## Heart

Irregular heart rhythms possible in people with heart disease.

## Toxicity

Lithium can be toxic if your level goes too high.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting new meds, particularly blood pressure meds, antibiotics and pain meds.



Aspirin and Tylenol (acetaminophen) are fine, but other over-the-counter pain meds (called NSAIDs) can raise lithium levels.