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Toxicity refers to how poisonous or harmful a substance can be. In the context of pharmacology, drug toxicity occurs when a person has accumulated too much of a drug in his bloodstream, leading to adverse effects on the body. Drug toxicity may occur when the dose is given is too high or the liver or kidneys are unable to remove the drug from the bloodstream, allowing it to accumulate in the body.

Drug toxicity can occur as a result of the over-ingestion of a medication or having too much of a drug in a person's system at once. This can happen if the dose taken exceeds the prescribed dose, either intentionally or accidentally.

In some cases, such as with the drug lithium, the threshold between what is an effective dose and what is a toxic dose is very narrow. A therapeutic dose for one person might be toxic to another person.Drugs with a longer half-life can build up in a person's bloodstream and increase over time. Additionally, factors such as age, kidney function, and hydration can affect how quickly your body is able to clear a medication from your system.This is why medications such as lithium require frequent blood testing to keep track of the levels of the drug in your bloodstream.