



EPILEPSY & Medication

Valproic Acid (DEPAKENE®/DEPAKOTE®/EPIVAL®)

Used for:

- Absence seizures.
- Tonic-clonic (grand mal), myoclonic, atonic, tonic seizures.
- Partial seizures.
- Photosensitive seizures.
- Lennox-Gastaut syndrome.

Precautions:

- Inform your doctor if you are a person with liver, kidney or blood disease or dysfunction.
- Because of small risk of liver failure, patients and parents should report symptoms of weakness, lethargy, facial swelling, anorexia, jaundice, vomiting, and loss of seizure control.
- Evidence of hemorrhaging or bruising or a blood clotting problem warrants immediate investigation.
- Elderly persons should use caution.
- Refrain from activities requiring mental alertness or physical coordination (e.g. operating hazardous machines, driving) until you are sure that valproic acid does not affect your abilities.

Possible side effects:

Depending on the individual, side effects may occur at varying degrees or not at all, including:

- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Indigestion.
- Drowsiness.
- Fatigue.
- Emotional and behavioural disturbances.
- Weight gain.
- Menstrual irregularities.
- Transient hair loss.
- Tremor (rare).
- Dizziness (rare).
- Loss of coordination (rare).
- Visual disturbances (rare).

Allergic Reaction:

- Skin rash (if you notice a rash, seek immediate medical help).
- Bone marrow suppression, liver toxicity (see “Precautions” for symptoms), pancreatitis.



Tips For Using Valproate

- Swallow tablets or capsules without chewing.
- Stomach upset may be helped by taking the drug with food.
- Stomach upset usually disappears over time.
- Sedation tends to be worse in combination drug therapy, and may disappear once doctor reduces other anti-epileptic medication.
- Valproic acid may interact with other antiepileptic drugs, so periodic blood level monitoring recommended.

This material has been reviewed by the Ontario Drug Information and Research Centre and is offered to provide general information to the public. It is not intended to be taken as medical advice. Epilepsy Toronto and its advisors accept no liability. Consult your physician and/or neurologist with any questions you may have.

Drug Interactions:

- Alcohol and other drugs that slow down the nervous system (CNS depressants) may interact with valproic acid to increase CNS depressant effects.
- Phenobarbital and primidone may interact with valproic acid to produce severe CNS depression.
- Clonazepam may interact with valproic acid to produce continuous absence seizures in people with a history of absence seizures.
- Phenytoin interaction is complex; there have been reports of break-through seizures.
- Carbamazepine concentrations may increase while valproic acid may decrease.
- Lamotrigine metabolism is inhibited by valproic acid.
- Aspirin and warfarin affect blood clotting and should be used with caution while taking valproic acid.
- Some anti-depressants may interact with valproic acid.
- Oral contraceptives' efficacy not affected.

Inform your doctor and pharmacist of any other medicines (prescription and nonprescription) or substances you are taking.

Daily Dosage:

Adults - 1,000-2,000 mg.

Children - 15 - 40 mg/kg.

Dosage should be individualized according to patient's response.

Forms:

Syrup - 50 mg/ml.

Tablets - 125, 250, and 500 mg.

Capsules – 250, 500 mg capsules.

Dosage should be individualized.

Missed Dose:

Try to take each dose at the scheduled time. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as remembered. Do not take it if it is near the time for the next dose, instead, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not “double-up” the dose to catch up. If you skip a whole day, inform your doctor.

Storage:

Store at room temperature (15 to 30°C), protect from light, heat, and moisture, and keep out of reach of children. Do not use capsules that are discoloured

In Pregnancy:

- Anti-epileptic medications may slightly increase the risk of fetal abnormalities.
- Women who are considering pregnancy should first consult their doctor
- Risk of having a child with spina bifida is about 1-2% if exposed in the first trimester.
- Generally, mothers should not breastfeed while on this drug.

Warning:

Abrupt withdrawal of any anti-epileptic medication may trigger status epilepticus, a potentially fatal condition of continued seizures without recovery. When there is a need for reduction, discontinuation or substitution of the medication, this should be done gradually and under the physician's care. Never discontinue anti-epileptic medications or make changes in activities unless specifically advised to do so by an attending physician.