

**Medication: Valproic acid (Depakene®), Divalproex sodium (Epival®)**

**What is Valproic acid/Divalproex sodium?**

Valproate is an anticonvulsant medication used to control certain types of seizures. It can also be used for prevention of migraine and to treat certain types of pain. It can also be used to treat bipolar disorder. Divalproex sodium is a compound of valproic acid and sodium valproate which breaks down into valproic acid in the gastrointestinal tract.

**Expected Benefit:**

- Usually takes several weeks to notice a benefit
- You may not notice a benefit until you get to a dose of 250 mg twice a day

**Watch for possible side effects:**

It is important to be aware of the side effects however, it is also important to remember that not all side effects occur in everyone. Many of the less serious side effects will improve over the first few days of taking the medication.

If you have problems with these side effects talk with your doctor or pharmacist:

- Nausea
- Drowsiness
- Weight gain
- Stomach upset and abdominal pain

**Warnings:**

- You should NOT take this medication if you are of childbearing age
- This medication can CAUSE BIRTH DEFECTS
- Effective contraception must be used during therapy
- It has been associated with liver failure in some patients
- It has been associated with severe pancreas injury in some patients

**Monitoring:**

- You will need bloodwork before you start valproate
- After you are on valproate, you will need bloodwork:
  - Monthly for 6 months
  - Then every 6 months

**Stopping the medication:**

This medication should not be stopped abruptly. Your doctor may advise you to reduce the dose slowly to help prevent your symptoms from returning.

**How to use this medication:**

- Take this medication with or without food
- Take with food/snack if stomach upset occurs

**Dosing Schedule:**

- Start with 125 mg in the morning
- Increase dose according to table below
- You can stay at the same dose (stop increasing) if you get side effects
  - You might want to lower the dose one step

Morning	Evening	
125 mg		For 2 weeks
125 mg	125 mg	For 2 weeks
250 mg	125 mg	For 2 weeks
250 mg	250 mg	Stay on this dose for 4 – 8 weeks

- Review with clinic before further increasing the dose

**Drugs and Foods to Avoid:**

Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using any other medication, including non-prescription medication (over-the-counter medication) and herbal products.

- Avoid alcohol use

Please contact the Complex Chronic Diseases Program if you have further questions about your medications.