Sodium valproate drug information

Drug brand names

- Sodium valproate
- Epilim, Epilim Chrono, Epilim Chronosphere
- Episenta
- Epival
- Convulex (valproic acid)
- Depakote (valproic acid) – not used in epilepsy

Formulation

Sodium valproate is available in:

- 100mg crushable tablets
- 200mg and 500mg enteric coated tablets
- 200mg/5ml oral solution
- 200mg, 300mg and 500mg modified release (MR) tablets
- 50mg, 100mg, 250mg, 500mg, 750mg and 1000mg MR sachets (Epilim Chronosphere)
- 150mg and 300mg Episenta brand MR capsules
- 150mg, 300mg and 500mg enteric coated capsules (Convulex brand)
- 100mg/ml intravenous solution for use in hospital only
- 500mg and 1000mg (Episenta) MR sachets

Uses

Sodium valproate is used to reduce seizure frequency and severity in people who have epilepsy, it can be used for many types of seizure. Sodium valproate is also used to treat certain types of pain, migraine and bipolar disorders.

Side effects *(the list of side effects is not exhaustive, please refer to product literature for full list)*

In our experience dose-related side effects become more likely the higher the dose of medication and improve if the dose is reduced again. They sometimes occur temporarily when the medication is started or as the dose is increased. These tend to include nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. They often settle within a few weeks.

- Common side effects are sleepiness, difficulty concentrating and tremor.
- Less commonly
  - Unusual movements to the arm, leg, facial or neck muscles
  - Lethargy
  - Problems with balance or co-ordination
  - Thinning of the hair (usually reversible on stopping the drug)
Headache
Unusual eye movements
Rash
Aggression, or mood changes

- All antiepileptic medication can cause feelings of depression, or severe mood changes. If you experience any of these please contact your specialist.
- Some patients will notice an increase in weight. The best way of dealing with this is to weigh yourself regularly on the same set of scales and if your weight starts to increase, discuss the options with your doctor.
- Medically serious side effects are very rare but may affect the blood or the liver. Blood tests will be performed where appropriate.

- The following side effects should be reported to a medical professional as soon as possible:
  - Yellowing of the skin or eyes
  - Severe abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting
  - New weakness, feeling generally unwell, reduced appetite and drowsiness which may occur with vomiting and abdominal pain
  - Increase in seizure frequency
  - Unusual or unexplained bleeding, bruising or a sore throat

In the event of any of these side effects, contact the epilepsy nurse (contact details are at the end of the leaflet), or your GP.

Contraception
Sodium valproate does not affect the contraceptive pill or hormone replacement therapy (HRT). The pill is the most effective form of contraception in preventing pregnancy. However other preferred methods of contraception can be used.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding
There is some suggestion that sodium valproate may affect fertility in women, but this is not proven. You should ask to see your specialist to discuss your treatment before you conceive. Once you are pregnant it is too late to make changes.

The risks to your baby from sodium valproate include spina bifida and skull/ facial defects such as cleft lip. Others include defects of the urinary system, heart and the limbs, delayed mental development and low intelligence quotient (IQ). The risk depends on the dosage and whether or not you are also taking other antiepileptic medication with sodium valproate.

We recommend you take folic acid 5mg daily from at least twelve weeks prior to conception until the end of week 12 of pregnancy in order to reduce this risk. Sodium valproate is excreted into breast milk in small amounts. Consult your specialist if you wish to breastfeed whilst taking sodium valproate, who will advise you about how best to monitor your baby.
**Drug interactions**

Paracetamol can be given with sodium valproate. Please let your doctor and pharmacist know that you are taking sodium valproate before starting to take any new medication, in particular aspirin and warfarin. This includes medication acquired over the counter from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.

Sodium valproate can affect how some medications work and can itself be affected by certain medications, therefore it is important for health professionals to know you are taking sodium valproate.

**Other useful information**

- Sodium valproate can be taken with or without food. Taking with food may help to reduce side effects. Do not stop taking your medication without first consulting your specialist.
- If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. **Do not take two doses at once.**
- Store your medication in the packaging it comes in below 30°C. There are many types of sodium valproate; ensure you check storage conditions for each type on your patient information leaflet (in the box).
- Keep a record of your seizures when you start any new medication. This will help to determine future drug dosages.

**Contact details**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the epilepsy nurse specialist on 01223 217992.

**The information on this leaflet is not exhaustive. Please refer to the patient information leaflet prepared by the manufacturer of your drug which can be found in the medicine packaging.**
We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team:

patient.info@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

Document history
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