Jeffrey Panko NP
PSYCHIATRY

Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC
Phone 646-549-4694 | Fax 646-558-4238
JMPankoNP@JeffreyPanko.com
jeffreypanko.com

PATIENT EDUCATION

Valproate

Divalproex / Valproic acid / Depakote and other formulations

A guide for adults taking valproate.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

FOLLOW YOUR EXACT FORMULATION | KEEP YOUR BLOOD TESTS

Formulations: Valproic acid, delayed-release divalproex, extended-release divalproex, liquid, and sprinkle capsules have different schedules. Switching can require a different total dose.

What it is used for

Valproate formulations treat certain seizures; specific divalproex formulations also treat bipolar mania and prevent migraine. The reason for use determines the dose, monitoring, and reproductive precautions.

How it works

Valproate affects GABA signaling and several ion channels involved in nerve activity. Its broad actions contribute to benefit and also to important liver, metabolic, and reproductive risks.

What to expect over time

The dose is often increased gradually to balance benefit and side effects. Track the condition being treated and report changes after each adjustment.

Taking your medication

- Follow the exact formulation and schedule. Food may reduce nausea.
- Swallow delayed-release and ER tablets whole. Labeled sprinkle capsules can be opened onto soft food and swallowed without chewing.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Consult with your provider before stopping or switching. Follow dose-timing instructions for a blood-level test.

Jeffrey Panko NP
PSYCHIATRY

Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC
Phone 646-549-4694 | Fax 646-558-4238
JMPankoNP@JeffreyPanko.com
jeffreypanko.com

VALPROATE / 02

Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Nausea, tremor, or dizziness
- Sleepiness or slowed thinking
- Weight gain
- Hair thinning or menstrual changes

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Report changes in mood, behavior, concentration, or suicidal thoughts. Antiseizure medicines carry a warning about suicidal thoughts and behavior.

Keep follow-up appointments. Your provider may adjust treatment based on symptoms, kidney or liver function, other medicines, and any recommended laboratory tests.

Keep liver tests, blood counts and platelets, and drug-level checks as directed. Serious liver injury is especially important early in treatment. Ammonia testing may be needed for unexplained confusion or vomiting.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Valproate can cause major birth defects and adverse developmental effects. It is contraindicated for migraine prevention during pregnancy and in people who can become pregnant without effective contraception. For epilepsy or bipolar disorder, use in pregnancy or those planning pregnancy is generally reserved for situations when alternatives are inadequate. Discuss contraception and plans to father a child.

Liver disease, urea-cycle disorders, and certain POLG-related mitochondrial disorders can rule out treatment. Discuss pancreatitis, bleeding, pregnancy, and breastfeeding.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Valproate raises lamotrigine exposure and serious-rash risk. Topiramate can add high-ammonia or low-temperature reactions.

Carbapenem antibiotics can sharply lower levels. Aspirin, anticoagulants, cannabidiol, and other medicines may add bleeding or liver risks.

Jeffrey Panko NP
PSYCHIATRY

Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC
Phone 646-549-4694 | Fax 646-558-4238
JMPankoNP@JeffreyPanko.com
jeffreypanko.com

VALPROATE / 03

Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for severe abdominal pain with vomiting, marked confusion or unresponsiveness, a severe allergic reaction, or a prolonged or repeated seizure.

Prompt medical advice. Seek prompt assessment for jaundice, dark urine, persistent vomiting, unusual bleeding, a new rash, or possible pregnancy. Do not abruptly stop seizure or bipolar treatment on your own.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Can I stop if I feel well?
Consult with your provider before stopping. Abrupt withdrawal can cause seizures or a return of the condition being treated.

Does use for seizures mean I have epilepsy?
Not necessarily. Some antiseizure medicines have other approved or off-label uses. Confirm the specific goal of your prescription.

Everyday tips

Use reminders and arrange refills before you run out.

Avoid driving until you know how treatment affects you; seizure-related driving restrictions may also apply.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

Official prescribing information: valproate
Official prescribing information: valproate
Official prescribing information: valproate

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.