

# **Valproic Acid**

## **What is valproic acid?**

VALPROIC ACID capsules can help with seizure (convulsion) control in certain types of epilepsy. This drug also is used for other conditions, such as treatment of bipolar disorder, mania, migraines, and behavioral problems associated with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Generic valproic acid capsules are available.

## **What should I tell my health care provider before I take this medicine?**

They need to know if you have any of these conditions:

- blood disease
- brain damage or disease
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- low blood proteins
- urea cycle disorder (UCD)
- an unusual or allergic reaction to valproic acid, other medicines, foods, dyes, or preservatives
- pregnant or trying to get pregnant
- breast-feeding

## **How should I take this medicine?**

Take valproic acid capsules by mouth. Follow the directions on the prescription label. Swallow the capsules whole with a drink of water. If valproic acid upsets your stomach, take it with food or milk; do not take with carbonated drinks. Take your doses at regular intervals. Do not take your medicine more often than directed.

Contact your pediatrician or health care professional regarding the use of this medicine in children. Special care may be needed.

## **What if I miss a dose?**

If you take only one dose each day, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If you do not remember until the next day, skip the missed dose and go on with your regular schedule. Do not take double or extra doses. If you take more than one dose a day and miss a dose, take it if you remember within 6 hours. Space the other doses for that day at regular intervals, do not take two doses at once.

## **What drug(s) may interact with valproic acid?**

- agents that dissolve blood clots
- alcohol
- antacids
- antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen)
- aspirin
- barbiturate medicines for inducing sleep or treating seizures (convulsions)
- blood thinners
- isoniazid

- medicines for mental depression
- medicines for mental problems and psychotic disturbances
- other seizure (convulsion) or epilepsy medicines
- sevelamer

Tell your prescriber or health care professional about all other medicines you are taking, including non-prescription medicines, nutritional supplements, or herbal products. Also tell your prescriber or health care professional if you are a frequent user of drinks with caffeine or alcohol, if you smoke, or if you use illegal drugs. These may affect the way your medicine works. Check with your healthcare professional before stopping or starting any medicines while taking valproic acid.

**What side effects may I notice from taking valproic acid?**

Side effects that you should report to your prescriber or health care professional as soon as possible:

- agitation, restlessness, irritability, or other changes in mood
- blurred or double vision or uncontrollable eye movements
- changes in the frequency or severity of seizures
- double vision, or involuntary eye movements
- redness, blistering, peeling or loosening of the skin, including inside the mouth
- skin rash or itching
- stomach pain or cramps
- trembling of hands or arms
- unusual bleeding or bruising or pinpoint red spots on the skin
- unusual swelling of the arms or legs
- unusual tiredness or weakness
- yellowing of skin or eyes

Side effects that usually do not require medical attention (report to your prescriber or health care professional if they continue or are bothersome):

- breast enlargement, unusual production of breast milk
- changes in menstrual periods
- clumsiness or unsteadiness
- diarrhea or constipation
- difficulty speaking
- dizziness or drowsiness
- headache
- increased sensitivity to sun or ultraviolet light
- irregular menstrual cycle
- loss of bladder control
- loss of hair or unusual growth of hair
- loss or increase in appetite
- nausea or vomiting
- skin rash, itching
- weight gain or loss

### **What should I watch for while taking valproic acid?**

Visit your prescriber or health care professional for a regular check on your progress.

If you are taking valproic acid to treat epilepsy (seizures), do not stop taking valproic acid suddenly. This increases the risk of seizures. Wear a Medic Alert bracelet or necklace. Carry an identification card with information about your condition, medications, and prescriber or health care professional.

Do not change brands or dosage forms of valproic acid without discussing the change with your prescriber or healthcare professional.

You may get drowsy, dizzy, or have blurred vision. Do not drive, use machinery, or do anything that needs mental alertness until you know how valproic acid affects you. To reduce dizzy or fainting spells, do not sit or stand up quickly, especially if you are an older patient. Alcohol can increase drowsiness and dizziness. Avoid alcoholic drinks.

Valproic acid can cause blood problems. This can mean slow healing and a risk of infection. Problems can arise if you need dental work, and in the day to day care of your teeth. Try to avoid damage to your teeth and gums when you brush or floss your teeth.

If you are going to have surgery, tell your prescriber or health care professional that you are taking valproic acid.

### **Where can I keep my medicine?**

Keep out of reach of children in a container that small children cannot open.

Store at room temperature between 15 and 25 degrees C (59 and 77 degrees F). Keep container tightly closed. Throw away any unused medicine after the expiration date.

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**NOTE: This information is not intended to cover all possible uses, precautions, interactions, or adverse effects for this drug. If you have questions about the drug(s) you are taking, check with your health care professional.**