

Sodium Valproate

Medication Information Leaflet

What is this medication for?

Sodium valproate is used to control some types of seizures (commonly known as fits). It can also be used as a mood stabilizer to help reduce mood swings in bipolar disorder. This medication is also used in other medical conditions such as prevention of migraine headaches.

How should I take/use this medication?

Follow the instructions on your medication label and take the medication as prescribed by your doctor.

You should take this medication with or after food.

If you are taking the controlled-release tablet (Chrono), swallow the tablet whole or halved, do not chew or crush. These tablets are specially designed to release the medication slowly over a period of time.

If you are taking the enteric coated tablets, swallow it whole, do not crush or chew. This formulation of sodium valproate helps to reduce stomach upset caused by this medication.

If you are using oral syrup, do not mix the medication with any carbonated drink. Use a medicine spoon or graduated syringe provided to measure your medication. Do not use household spoons as they may not be accurate.

You may not experience any benefits immediately after starting the medication as it may take up to a few weeks before this medication can work fully. You should continue to take your medication regularly as instructed by your doctor even if you feel well. Stopping your medication without informing your healthcare professional may cause your condition to worsen quickly.

Do not stop taking or adjust the dose of this medication without consulting your healthcare professional. Do not change the medication that was dispensed to you without informing your healthcare professional.

What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Do not double your dose or use extra medication to make up for the missed dose.

What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if you have the following medical conditions before starting on sodium valproate:

- Liver problems
- Kidney problems
- Pancreas problems
- Blood related disease
- Drug allergies

For female patients of child-bearing age: Discuss with your doctor regarding family planning if you will be starting or currently taking sodium valproate.

Consult your healthcare professional immediately if your seizures get worse or become different after you start on this medication.

What are some common side effects of this medication?

Like all medications, sodium valproate may cause some possible side effects but not everyone experiences them. Consult your healthcare professional if any of the side effects lasts more than a few days or become severe and bothersome.

The common side effects of sodium valproate include:

- Dizziness or feeling lightheaded
 - Get up slowly from sitting or lying down position
- Drowsiness
 - Avoid driving, operating machinery or doing strenuous physical activities
- Diarrhoea
 - Drink more water to keep hydrated
- Nausea, vomiting, stomach upset or stomach cramp
 - Take the medication with or after food to reduce nausea and vomiting
 - Avoid food that is too rich, spicy or has strong smells
 - Eat small but frequent meals to minimise bloating after a meal
- Change in hair texture to finer at the beginning when you start to use the medication
- Increase in appetite, weight gain

- Exercise regularly and eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Slight and fine tremors of fingers and hands at the beginning of using the medication.
- Irregular and/or painful menstruation

What are some rare but serious side effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face / eyes/ lips / tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and see your healthcare professional immediately.

If the following serious side effects happen, you should consult your healthcare professional immediately:

- Blistering, peeling, red skin rash due to Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS) or Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN)
 - SJS and TEN are rare and serious skin reactions. Symptoms include face swelling, blisters on skin, skin rashes that spread within hours to days. It usually occurs within the first few months (monitor closely for the first 3 months) of treatment.
 - As SJS and TEN progress rapidly, please consult a healthcare professional if you show the first sign of rash.
- Severe weakness or dizziness
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Liver problems: Dark-coloured urine or light-coloured stools, yellowing of your eyes or skin, severe loss of appetite, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting that does not go away
- Blurred vision or double vision/ unsteady movements

In rare cases, this medication may cause the following changes to a person's mental condition, especially in the first few weeks of treatment or during dose changes:

- Worsening agitation, restlessness, violent behaviour, or
- New or worsening thoughts of harming yourself or ending your life
- Other changes in mood or behaviour

Please inform your doctor as soon as possible, or for your family or caregiver to inform your doctor if you are unable to seek treatment on your own.

Do not stop taking this medication on your own without discussing with your doctor.

It is important to note that your doctor has prescribed this medication as he/ she thinks you will benefit more from taking this medication over the possible risks that it may cause,

which have a low chance of occurring, and most people take this medication without any of such problems.

What food or medication should I avoid when I take/use this medication?

Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this medication as it can cause excessive drowsiness.

There are several medications that affect the level of this medication in your body. Please consult your healthcare professional before using any other medications, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins and herbal products.

How should I store this medication?

Keep the medication in the original container, tightly closed or sealed. Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children.

How should I throw this medication safely?

Pack this medication into a black trash bag and seal it tightly before throwing it into the rubbish chute or bin.

Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.

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