# VALPROATE SODIUM

*val-pro-ate so-dee-um*

## What does it do?

*Valproate sodium* is used to treat and prevent seizures. Sometimes it is used for other conditions such as bipolar disorder.

## Before you start

- *Valproate sodium* can seriously harm an unborn baby if it is taken during pregnancy. If there is a chance you could get pregnant, you will need to take a pregnancy test before starting and while you are taking it. It is very important to use reliable contraception. Talk with your doctor about your contraceptive options. If you plan to get pregnant, or find you are pregnant, contact your doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you have liver problems, or if you are breastfeeding.

## How should you take it?

Take *valproate sodium* regularly as directed with food and a glass of water.
Enteric coated (EC) 200 mg and 500 mg tablet: Swallow whole – do not crush or chew.
100 mg tablet: You can crush these if you need to.
Liquid: Measure carefully with an oral syringe or measuring spoon. Shake the bottle well before measuring each dose.
Do not stop taking *valproate sodium* without talking to your doctor first, unless you have a skin rash (see Side Effects).

## What if you forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as possible and continue as directed.

## Can you take other medicines?

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products (e.g. ginkgo) or recreational drugs (e.g. ecstasy).

## What side effects might you notice?

| Side Effects | Recommended action |
|---|---|
| Skin rash, skin peeling or blisters | Stop taking and see your doctor immediately |
| Suicidal thoughts<br>Severe stomach pain, nausea<br>Symptoms of liver problems including: yellow skin or eyes, itching, dark urine, pale bowel motions, abdominal pain<br>Reduced number of blood cells that fight infections or help your blood to clot - symptoms include: fever, chills, sore throat or generally feeling unwell, or easy or unusual bruising or bleeding | Tell your doctor immediately |
| Confusion, drowsiness or weakness<br>Loss of co-ordination/walking or handwriting problems, tremor<br>Memory problems<br>Changes in vision, unusual eye movements<br>Hearing loss, ringing in the ears | Tell your doctor |
| Headache, dizziness<br>Swollen feet or legs<br>Hair loss or thinning<br>Changes in periods<br>Change of appetite or weight, diarrhoea, stomach upset | Tell your doctor if troublesome |

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

## Other information:

- *Valproate sodium* can impair your ability to do tasks such as driving or using machines. Alcohol makes this worse. Discuss your risk with your health professional. (search NZTA - Are you safe to drive?)