

## **SODIUM VALPROATE and VALPROIC ACID**

This is an antiepileptic drug, it is used to treat conditions such as Epilepsy and Bipolar Disorder.

### **Pregnancy and Breastfeeding**

Sodium valproate and Valproic acid are not recommended in pregnancy as they can cause birth defects and problems with your baby's learning and behaviour.

If you are planning a pregnancy, speak to your Doctor or Specialist.

If you become pregnant whilst taking this medication contact your Doctor or Specialist as soon as possible. Do not stop taking your medication without talking to your doctor.

For women or girls of childbearing age, you will be put on the valproate pregnancy prevention programme called Prevent if you have to take sodium valproate.

If your doctor or health visitor says your baby is healthy you can take sodium valproate or valproic acid while breastfeeding.

Talk to your health visitor, midwife, pharmacist or doctor as soon as possible if:

- your baby is not feeding as well as usual
- your baby is bruising more easily than usual
- the whites of your baby's eyes turn yellow or your baby's skin turns yellow (this may be less obvious on brown or black skin), or your baby has dark pee or pale poo – these can be signs of jaundice
- You have any other concerns about your baby.

### **Links**

Prevent (Valproate Patient Booklet) Attachment:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950801/107995\\_Valproate\\_Patient\\_Booklet\\_v05\\_DS\\_07-01-2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950801/107995_Valproate_Patient_Booklet_v05_DS_07-01-2021.pdf)

Bumps (Best Use of Medicines in Pregnancy) website:

<https://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/bumps/Medicine--pregnancy/sodium-valproate/>

NHS England Letter to women and girls taking sodium valproate (available in multiple languages)

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/letter-to-women-and-girls-taking-sodium-valproate/>

### **Monitoring**

When your medication is prescribed by the GP, you will be required to have regular blood test monitoring, to ensure their optimum safety.

These blood tests are required every 12 months and are comprised of a Full Blood Count (FBC), Liver Function Test (LFT) and a Prothrombin Time Test.

You will also need to provide your weight and height on a yearly basis as this medication can cause weight gain.

You **must** have a review of your treatment every year. Contact your Specialist now if you have not had one.

**If you take too much** sodium valproate or valproic acid and feel unwell, contact 111, it can lead to symptoms such as:

- feeling or being sick (nausea or vomiting)
- headaches, or feeling dizzy
- muscle weakness
- breathing problems
- feeling confused, or changes to your normal behaviour
- passing out

### **Side Effects**

Talk to your Doctor or Specialist if you experience these side effects or if they do go away:

- stomach pain, feeling or being sick
- diarrhoea
- dry or sore mouth, or swollen gums
- shakes (tremors) in a part of your body, or unusual eye movements
- feeling tired or sleepy
- headache
- weight gain
- thinning hair, or changes to the colour or texture of your hair
- irregular or delayed periods

### **Serious Side Effects**

Tell the Doctor or Specialist immediately if you have:

- thoughts of harming or killing yourself – a small number of people taking sodium valproate have had suicidal thoughts
- yellowing of the whites of your eyes or your skin, although this may be less obvious on brown or black skin, and dark pee – these may be signs of liver problems
- long-lasting and severe nausea, vomiting or stomach pain – these may be signs of acute pancreatitis (an inflamed pancreas)
- unusual bruises or bleeding – these may be signs of a blood disorder