This leaflet provides general information about your medication. Manufacturer patient information leaflets are also provided with all medicines. If you require further information, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Valproate is available as regular and slow release tablets containing sodium valproate called:
- Epilim® or Orlept®
- Epilim Chrono, Epilim Chronosphere® or Episenta®

It is also available as a liquid:
- Epilim® Liquid, Epilim® Syrup and Orlept® SF liquid

Valproate is also available as valproic acid:
- Depakote® tablets (semisodium valproate)
- Convulex® (capsules)

Injection forms are also available (Epilim® Intravenous or Episenta® solution for injection).

Valproate is pronounced:

Val-pro-ate.

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Mersey Care Medicines Information Service regularly updates this information sheet.

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**What is Valproate for?**

Valproate is part of a group of medicines called mood stabilisers that are used to help prevent and treat severe mood swings. Mood swings can vary from a state of high excitability, exaggerated emotion, elation, high energy and over-optimistic ideas to being extremely low and depressed. Valproate also belongs to a group of medicines called anticonvulsants used to control fits. It can also be used as a painkiller for migraine headaches.

**How should I take Valproate?**

Before taking any valproate, tell your doctor if:

- you are allergic to valproate
- you suffer from any other conditions especially heart, kidney or liver disease, pancreas problems, blood disorders, porphyria, skin disorders, systemic lupus, diabetes
- you take any other medication, including contraception
- you are pregnant (or planning pregnancy) or breastfeeding

Your doctor will decide how much valproate is right for you to take, depending on your age, body weight and other current conditions. Tablets should be swallowed whole with a glass of water at the times advised by your doctor. If you are taking the liquid, you will be supplied with the right measure. If you are prescribed the injection, the nurse will give you the correct dose. Ask your pharmacist or nurse if you are not sure of anything.

**Can I stop taking Valproate if I feel better?**

It is better to discuss with your doctor how long you will need to be on medication. Mood stabilisers tend to be taken for a long time. If you want to stop your medication it is better to do this in discussion with your doctor, and slowly so that you can be monitored for any deterioration or unpleasant withdrawal side effects.

**What if I forget to take a dose?**

Take the missed dose as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at the usual time. Do not double the dose or take extra doses to make up.

**When will Valproate start to work?**

Although some people feel better as soon as they begin taking valproate, most improve more gradually. It can take anything from a few days to several weeks for a noticeable improvement.
Will I need any blood tests while taking this medicine?
Blood tests may be required and will only be done if your doctor requests them.

Are there any side effects?
Valproate may cause side effects in some people, but they may vary from person to person. Many side effects wear off over time. Known side effects include:
- upset stomach (feeling sick, stomach ache)
- drowsiness
- headaches
- feeling shaky
- diarrhoea
- confusion
- inability to hear
- feeling tired or weak
- changes to breast and periods
- increased appetite and weight gain
- hair loss (this may pass and is linked to dose)

Occasionally, more serious side effects can occur. These include:
- liver problems – feeling sick, tiredness, yellow eyes or skin
- allergy – rash, itching, swelling, breathing problems
- blood disorders
- signs of infection - fever, chills, sore throat, mouth ulcers
- severe rashes with blistering
- odd movements or twitches
- feeling anxious, agitated or confused and aggressive.
- distressing thoughts of wanting to harm or kill yourself

If you suffer these or any other side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. If you think a medicine has caused you an unwanted side effect, please report the problem either on a Yellow Card form available from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist OR online at this website [http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/](http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/)

Can I take other medicines?
Other medicines (particularly other medicines for epilepsy) may interact with valproate causing unwanted effects. Medicines you can buy over the counter without a prescription may interact with prescribed medicines. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines.
Can I drive?
Valproate can make you feel sleepy and slow your reactions. If you are affected in this way, do not drive or work with machinery. If you have epilepsy, there are also laws about your eligibility to drive. Please consult your doctor or the DVLA for more information.

Can I drink alcohol?
Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this medication. The combined effects of valproate and alcohol can make you feel more sleepy than usual.

Can I get pregnant or breast feed?
Medicines can have harmful effects at any time during pregnancy. Valproate is not usually prescribed during pregnancy because it can harm the unborn baby. If you are pregnant, or are planning to get pregnant, you should seek advice from your doctor. You and your doctor or specialist will decide if the potential benefits of treatment outweigh the potential risks to the baby.

Valproate passes into breast milk. If you are breast-feeding, you should get your doctor’s advice.

What alternative treatments are there?
Other medications that may be prescribed as mood stabilisers include lithium, lamotrigine and carbamazepine. If you are taking valproate for epilepsy or migraines, there are many other alternative medications.

Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to provide you with further information about these medications.

IMPORTANT
Remember to keep medicines where children cannot see or reach them. Never share medicines with others even if their symptoms appear the same as yours.

NEVER EXCEED THE STATED DOSE OF YOUR MEDICINE.