

Divalproex sodium (Depakote[®], Depakote ER[®])

ALAMEDA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Client's Name _____ Date _____

Initial Medication Instructions _____

What does this medication help to treat?

- Bipolar disorder or other conditions
- Mood swings or fluctuations in mood
- Agitation, aggression, or hostility
- Poor concentration, rapid thoughts
- Excessive behavior (e.g. spending, gambling, sex)
- Irritability

Depressive symptoms

- Fatigue or insomnia
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Social withdrawal
- Decreased energy or activity
- Overwhelming feelings of sadness

Divalproex is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your prescriber for more information.

Blood Level Monitoring

- An advantage of valproate is that your prescriber can check blood levels to find the right dose to work the best with the least risk of unwanted side effects.
- Your blood level should be: **50-125** mcg/ml (sometimes lower or higher levels are needed as determined by your prescriber).

Other Information

- You should start to notice some benefits of this medication within 2 to 5 days after initiation of therapy. If you have not experienced benefit after one month of treatment at the prescribed dose, contact your prescriber.
- Do not crush medication before use as it may increase risk of gastrointestinal side effects (nausea, diarrhea).
- This medication has been shown to cause significant birth defects in women taking it during pregnancy. Discuss the benefits vs. risks of divalproex with your prescriber if you are pregnant or have plans to become pregnant.

Side Effects and Management

Common (greater than 10 in 100 clients on this medication)

Nausea and Vomiting	Take your medicine with food. Take enteric-coated formulations. If vomiting continues, call your prescriber.
Diarrhea	Drink plenty of fluids and call your prescriber.
Drowsiness	Ask your prescriber about taking most or all of dose at bedtime. Use caution when driving or performing other tasks that require alertness.
Dizziness	Move slowly, stand up slowly.
Weight gain	Avoid foods high in fat and sugar. Eat balanced meals and maintain an active lifestyle. You may gain from 1-15 pounds over 1-6 months.

Uncommon (~1 to 10 in 100 clients on this medication)

Tremor	Let your prescriber know if you experience a tremor. Your prescriber may need to adjust your dose.
Hair loss	Zinc or selenium supplements may help prevent hair loss. Make sure to take these supplements at least 2 hours apart from your prescribed medication.
High level of ammonia in the blood	Let your prescriber know if you experience sluggishness, mental clouding, or sedation.

Rare (less than 1 in 100 clients on this medication)

Call your prescriber immediately if you experience any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Severe skin rash that spreads to other parts of the body.▪ Yellowing of the skin or eyes.▪ Thinner blood that could lead to easy bruising or bleeding.▪ High blood pressure, fast heartbeat.▪ Liver problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pancreatitis (abdominal pain or enlargement, nausea, vomiting, fever, jaundice, low blood pressure, pain radiating to back).▪ For females: missed periods and/or secretion of fluid from nipples, increased body hair growth, weight gain/obesity, difficulties getting pregnant (polycystic ovaries). <p>**References: Clinical Pharmacology, LexiComp 2011**</p>
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NOTE: This information is not intended to cover all possible uses, precautions, interactions, or adverse effects for this medication. If you have further questions about the medications you are taking, check with your healthcare professional.