

# divalproex sodium

**Pronunciation:** dye val PROE ex  
**Brand:** Depakote, Depakote ER, Depakote Sprinkles

## What is the most important information I should know about divalproex sodium?



In rare cases, divalproex sodium has caused liver failure, sometimes resulting in death. Children younger than 2 years of age, especially those taking multiple seizure medicines, those with metabolic diseases, those with mental retardation, and those with organic brain disease are at the highest risk of liver failure. Notify your doctor immediately if you develop loss of seizure control, weakness, fatigue, swelling of the face, vomiting, or loss of appetite. These symptoms may be early signs of liver damage.



In rare cases, divalproex sodium has also caused severe, even fatal, cases of pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas). Some of the cases have progressed rapidly from initial symptoms to death. Cases have been reported soon after starting treatment with divalproex sodium, as well as after several years of use. Notify your doctor immediately if you develop nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, or loss of appetite. These symptoms may be early signs of pancreatitis.



Do not stop taking your medication even if you feel better. It is important to continue taking divalproex sodium to prevent your seizures from recurring.



Do not crush, chew, or break the capsules or delayed- or extended-release tablets (Depakote, Depakote ER). Swallow them whole.

Carry or wear a medical identification tag to let others know that you are taking this medicine in the case of an emergency.



Divalproex sodium may interact with other drugs that cause drowsiness, including alcohol, antidepressants, antihistamines, pain relievers, anxiety medicines, and muscle relaxants. Dangerous sedation, dizziness, or drowsiness may occur if divalproex sodium is taken with alcohol or any of

these medications. Talk to your doctor before taking divalproex sodium in combination with alcohol or any other medicines.

## What is divalproex sodium?

Divalproex sodium affects chemicals in your body that may be involved in causing seizures, migraines, and mania. The exact way that it works is unknown.

Divalproex sodium is used to treat various types of seizure disorders, to prevent migraine headaches, and to control mania associated with bipolar disorder.

Divalproex sodium may also be used for purposes other than those listed in this medication guide.

## Who should not take divalproex sodium?



Do not take valproic acid if you have liver disease.



Divalproex sodium is in the FDA pregnancy category D. This means that it is known to harm an unborn baby. Malformations of the face and head, heart, and nervous system have been reported. Do not take divalproex sodium without first talking to your doctor if you are pregnant.



Divalproex sodium passes into breast milk and may affect a nursing infant. Do not take divalproex sodium without first talking to your doctor if you are breast-feeding a baby.

Divalproex sodium is not approved for the treatment of migraines in children younger than 16 years of age or for the treatment of mania in children younger than 18 years of age. Extreme caution must be used if valproic acid is used to treat seizures in a child younger than 2 years of age due to the increased risk of liver damage.

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## How should I take divalproex sodium?

Take divalproex sodium exactly as directed by your doctor. If you do not understand these directions, ask your pharmacist, nurse, or doctor to explain them to you.



Take each dose with a full glass of water.



Take divalproex sodium with food if it upsets your stomach.



Do not crush, chew, or break the capsules or delayed- or extended-release tablets (Depakote, Depakote ER). Swallow them whole.

The sprinkle capsules can either be swallowed whole or opened and sprinkled onto some soft food such as applesauce or pudding.

Your doctor may want you to have blood tests during your therapy. It is important for your doctor to know how much medication is in your blood and how well your liver is working.

Carry or wear a medical identification tag to let others know that you are taking this medicine in the case of an emergency.



Do not stop taking your medication even if you feel better. It is important to continue taking divalproex sodium to prevent your seizures from recurring.



Store divalproex sodium at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

## What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the dose you missed and take only your next regularly scheduled dose. **Do not** take a double dose of this medication.

## What happens if I overdose?



Seek emergency medical attention.

Symptoms of a divalproex sodium overdose include unconsciousness, sleepiness or drowsiness, faint or no heartbeat, decreased breathing, or stopped breathing.

## What should I avoid while taking divalproex sodium?



Divalproex sodium may interact with other drugs that cause drowsiness, including alcohol, antidepressants, antihistamines, pain relievers, anxiety medicines, and muscle relaxants. Dangerous sedation, dizziness, or drowsiness may occur if divalproex sodium is taken with alcohol or any of these medications. Talk to your doctor before taking divalproex sodium in combination with alcohol or any other medicines.



Use caution when driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities. Divalproex sodium may cause dizziness or drowsiness. If you experience dizziness or drowsiness, avoid these activities.

## What are the possible side effects of divalproex sodium?



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If you experience any of the following serious side effects, stop taking divalproex sodium and seek emergency medical attention:

- an allergic reaction (difficulty breathing; closing of your throat; swelling of your lips, tongue, or face; or hives);
- a rash;
- unusual bleeding or bruising; or
- double vision or back-and-forth movements of the eyes.

Other, less serious side effects may also occur. Continue to take divalproex sodium and notify your doctor if you experience

- tremor (shaking);
- weight gain;
- menstrual changes;
- hair loss;
- drowsiness or weakness;
- depression or other psychiatric changes;
- headache; or
- low red blood cells (anemia).

Side effects other than those listed here may also occur. Talk to your doctor about any side effect that seems unusual or that is especially bothersome.

## What other drugs will affect divalproex sodium?

Other drugs used to treat seizures such as phenytoin (Dilantin), carbamazepine (Tegretol), phenobarbital (Luminal, Solfoton), felbamate (Felbatol), lamotrigine (Lamictal), clonazepam (Klonopin), and others may increase or decrease the effects of divalproex sodium and may themselves have increased or decreased effectiveness. Tell your doctor about all other medications that you are taking.

Before taking divalproex sodium, tell your doctor if you are taking warfarin (Coumadin) or aspirin. Divalproex sodium may interact with these

medications and affect the clotting of your blood. You may require a dosage adjustment or special monitoring during treatment if you are taking either of these drugs.



Divalproex sodium may interact with other drugs that cause drowsiness, including alcohol, antidepressants, antihistamines, pain relievers, anxiety medicines, and muscle relaxants. Dangerous sedation, dizziness, or drowsiness may occur if divalproex sodium is taken with alcohol or any of these medications. Talk to your doctor before taking divalproex sodium in combination with alcohol or any other medicines.

Drugs other than those listed here may also interact with divalproex sodium. Talk to your doctor and pharmacist before taking any prescription or over-the-counter medicines.

## Where can I get more information?

Your pharmacist has additional information about divalproex sodium written for health professionals that you may read.

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**Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use this medication only for the indication prescribed.**

The information in this leaflet is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions, or adverse effects. If you have questions about the drugs you are taking, check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

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