Valproate
(Epilim, Depakote, Convulex, Episenta, Epival, Kentlim, Orlept, Sodium Valproate, Syonell and Valpal)
Patient Guide
I am starting treatment with valproate

What are the risks of taking valproate when pregnant?

Contraceptives for girls and women who are old enough to get pregnant

About this guide
I am taking valproate and I don’t want to get pregnant

I am taking valproate and I want to have a baby

I am taking valproate and I think I am pregnant

Things to remember
This guide is for girls and women who are old enough to get pregnant and who are taking medicine that has valproate in it.

Valproate is also called Epilim, Depakote, Convulex, Episenta, Epival, Kentlim, Orlept, Sodium Valproate, Syonell or Valpal.

You may see one of these names on your prescription or on the box of your medicine.

Valproate is used to treat conditions such as epilepsy or bipolar disorder.

You will need to take contraception while using valproate.
What are the risks of taking valproate when pregnant?

If you take valproate when you are pregnant it can seriously harm your baby.

If you take valproate the risks are higher than if you take other medicines for epilepsy or bipolar disorder.

There is a risk even if you only take a small dose of valproate. The higher the dose, the bigger the risk.

1 in 10 babies have a birth defect if a mother takes valproate when she is pregnant. A birth defect is where the baby didn't develop properly in the womb. Cleft lip is an example of a birth defect.
What are the risks of taking valproate when pregnant?

If a mother takes valproate when she is pregnant 4 in 10 children have development problems as they grow up.

If a mother takes valproate when she is pregnant her child could have the following development problems:

- Late learning to walk and talk.
- Lower intelligence
- Poor speech and language
- Memory problems

If a mother takes valproate while she is pregnant her baby is more likely to have Autism Spectrum Disorder.
You must use effective contraceptives while you are taking valproate.

The doctor explained to me that effective contraceptive includes: using a coil and contraceptive implant.

You must use contraceptives even if you are not sexually active at the moment.

You should talk to your doctor about the best type of contraceptive for you.
I am not old enough to get pregnant and starting treatment with valproate

If you are too young to get pregnant your doctor will explain the risks of valproate to your parents or carers.

Your doctor should only give you valproate if other medicines do not work.

You should talk to your doctor as soon as you have your first period to make sure that valproate is still the best medicine for you.
I am old enough to get pregnant and starting treatment with valproate

If you are old enough to get pregnant your doctor will ask you to take a pregnancy test before giving you valproate.

You will need to do regular pregnancy tests while you are taking valproate.

While you are taking valproate you will need to see your doctor every year to make sure that it is still the best medicine for you.

This is called an annual review meeting.

At your annual review meeting your doctor will ask you to sign an Annual Risk Acknowledgement Form to make sure that you understand the risks of taking valproate.
If you are taking valproate and you do not plan to have a baby you must use contraceptives all the time.

You should talk to your doctor about the best type of contraceptive for you.

You will need to do regular pregnancy tests while you are taking valproate.

This is to make sure you are not pregnant.
I am taking valproate and I don't want to get pregnant

While you are taking valproate you will need to see your doctor every year to make sure that it is still the best medicine for you.

This is called an annual review meeting.

At your annual review meeting your doctor will ask you to sign an Annual Risk Acknowledgement Form to make sure that you understand the risks of taking valproate.
If you want to have a baby you must talk to your doctor first. You must keep using contraceptives.

You must keep taking valproate until you speak with your doctor.

You must keep using contraceptives until you speak with your doctor.
I am taking valproate and I want to have a baby

Valproate can harm babies at any time in your pregnancy.

Your doctor will need to change your medicine a long time before you get pregnant.

This is to make sure that your new medicine is working properly.
You must talk to your doctor as soon as you think you are pregnant.

You **must** keep taking valproate until you speak with your doctor.

Your doctor will talk to you about changing to another medicine.
I am taking valproate and I think I am pregnant

Sometimes it is not possible to change to a different medicine.

If this happens your doctor will talk to you about your options.

Your doctor will ask you to sign an Annual Risk Acknowledgement Form to make sure that you understand the risks of taking valproate.
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You may see one of these names on your prescription or on the box of your medicine.

Valproate is used to treat conditions such as epilepsy or bipolar disorder.

Valproate can seriously harm an unborn baby.
Always use an effective contraceptive while you are taking valproate.

Talk to your doctor as soon as possible if you think you are pregnant.

Talk to your doctor if you are thinking about having a baby.

Don't stop taking valproate or stop contraception until you have talked to your doctor.
Key things to remember

Remember to see your doctor every year to talk about whether valproate is still the best medicine for you.

Sign the Annual Risk Acknowledgement Form to say that you understand the risks of taking valproate.
Key information to remember

You can find more information about epilepsy from the following organisations:

**Epilepsy Action**
www.epilepsy.org.uk
0808 800 5050

**Epilepsy Society**
www.epilepsysociety.org.uk
01494 601 400

**Young Epilepsy**
www.youngepilepsy.org.uk
01342 831 342

You can find more information about bipolar disorder from the following organisations:

**Bipolar UK**
www.bipolaruk.org
0333 323 3880

**Mind**
www.mind.org.uk
0300 123 3393