



## BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

November 2021

### What is valproate?

Valproate and its derivative, divalproex, are anticonvulsants used primarily in the treatment of epilepsy and migraine headaches. Anticonvulsant medications influence the actions of neurotransmitters leading to a decrease in brain cell (neuron) excitability. In bipolar disorder, valproate is used mainly for the treatment of mania or mixed symptoms.

### What is the evidence for valproate as a treatment for bipolar disorder?

Compared to placebo, moderate to high quality evidence found a medium-sized improvement in acute mania symptoms with valproate, and moderate to low quality evidence found a medium-sized improvement in acute depression symptoms. There was a medium-sized effect of fewer relapses over 12 months with valproate. Moderate quality evidence found valproate + lithium may also be effective for preventing relapses, particularly to mania.

Compared to imipramine, moderate quality evidence found fewer relapses with valproate + lithium or valproate + aripiprazole. There were fewer relapses with valproate + aripiprazole than with paliperidone.

For side effects, moderate quality evidence found lamotrigine and placebo were better tolerated than valproate + lithium. Valproate can result in higher rates of polycystic ovary syndrome, hyperandrogenism, and menstrual disorders than other medications.

For more information see the technical table



# NeuRA

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*NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.*

*Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.*

*Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.*

*While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about bipolar disorder or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.*

### HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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