



# NeuRA

Discover. Conquer. Cure.

BIPOLAR DISORDERS LIBRARY

## BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

April 2019

### 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?

For symptoms, moderate to low quality evidence suggests a medium-sized effect of greater improvement in acute depression symptoms with valproate than with placebo. Moderate to high quality evidence suggests medium-sized effects of greater improvement in acute mania symptoms with lithium than with placebo, topiramate or risperidone, although there was greater improvement in mania symptoms with tamoxefin than with lithium.

For relapse prevention, moderate to high quality evidence suggests small effects of valproate alone over placebo for preventing relapses to mania, but not relapses to depression. Moderate quality evidence suggests valproate + lithium may also be effective for preventing relapses to mania when compared to placebo, however, placebo was significantly better tolerated. There are small to medium-sized effects of fewer relapses in general with valproate + lithium or valproate + aripiprazole than with imipramine. There were also fewer relapses with valproate + aripiprazole than with paliperidone.

For side effects, moderate quality evidence suggests valproate can result in higher rates of polycystic ovary syndrome, hyperandrogenism, and menstrual disorders than other medications. No differences in rates of suicidality have been found between divalproex and placebo.

**For more information see the technical table**



# NeuRA

Discover. Conquer. Cure.

*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

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at [neura.edu.au](http://neura.edu.au).