PACKAGE LEAFLET: INFORMATION FOR THE USER

Convulex® 300 mg

Capsules

Active substance: Valproic acid

Read all of this leaflet carefully before you start taking this medicine.
- Keep this leaflet. You may need to read it again.
- If you have any further questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- This medicine has been prescribed for you. Do not pass it on to others. It may harm them, even if their symptoms are the same as yours.
- If any of the side effects get serious, or if you notice any side effects not listed in this leaflet, please tell your doctor or pharmacist.

In this leaflet:

1. WHAT CONVULEX IS AND WHAT IT IS USED FOR

The active substance contained in Convulex capsules has an anticonvulsant effect in various epileptic seizure types.
Moreover, Convulex capsules show good efficacy and rapid action in the treatment of acute manic phases in patients with manic-depressive illness. When used as a preventive medication, they can reduce the number and severity of both manic and depressive phases.
In addition, Convulex capsules have a preventive effect against migraine headaches.

Convulex capsules are used in the following indications:

Epilepsy:
For the treatment of various forms of epilepsy (fits).

Bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness):
For the treatment and/or prevention of manic episodes.

Migraine:
For the prevention of migraine attacks, if other treatments against migraine have not shown sufficient effect.

2. BEFORE YOU TAKE CONVULEX

Do not take Convulex
- if you are allergic (hypersensitive) to valproic acid or any of the other ingredients of Convulex;
- if you have an active liver disease;
- if close family-members suffer or have previously suffered from severe liver function disturbances;
- if you suffer from hepatic porphyria (a rare metabolic disease).

Take special care with Convulex
- if you suffer from "systemic lupus erythematosus" (a rare immune disorder): You should take Convulex capsules only after consultation with your doctor.
- if you need to undergo a surgical intervention: Inform the doctor before any operation that you are taking Convulex, because valproic acid may prolong the bleeding time.

Other things you should know before starting treatment with Convulex:
In rare cases severe liver damage resulting in death has been reported. Patients most at risk are children under the age of 3 years and those who suffer from congenital metabolic disorders or severe seizure forms, particularly if associated with mental retardation. In the majority of cases, liver damage occurred during the first 6 months of therapy, particularly between weeks 2 and 12 of treatment and mostly when other anti-epileptic drugs were given at the same time.
Non-specific symptoms of severe liver damage include: increase in seizure activity, not feeling well, weakness, loss of appetite, vomiting, pain in the upper abdomen, accumulation of fluid in tissue, lethargy, drowsiness, jaundice.
Similar symptoms may also occur in connection with an inflammation of the pancreas.
If any such symptoms occur, please consult a doctor immediately. Laboratory tests may become necessary.
A small number of people being treated with anti-epileptics such as Convulex have had thoughts of harming or killing themselves. If at any time you have these thoughts, immediately contact your doctor.
A possible weight gain during therapy was reported. Consult your doctor in order to discuss a suitable strategy against this risk.
Urine tests to diagnose diabetes may give false results because of valproic acid. Please inform your doctor before such tests that you are taking Convulex.
If you are pregnant or would like to become pregnant, please consult your doctor immediately about this.

Using other medicines
Please tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking or have recently taken any other medicines, including medicines obtained without a prescription.

Medicines and other substances may influence each other with regard to their effect.

Valproic acid may potentiate the effect of:
certain drugs against depression, certain sedatives or narcotics (neuroleptics, benzodiazepines), alcohol, other anticonvulsants (e.g. phenobarbital, primidone, phenytoin, carbamazepine, lamotrigine), certain medicines inhibiting blood coagulation, acetylsalicylic acid, and of zidovudine (used to treat HIV infections).

The following medicinal products may potentiate the effect of valproic acid:
e.g. certain antiepileptics (felbamate), acetylsalicylic acid, certain antibiotics (e.g. erythromycin), cimetidine (used to treat stomach ulcers).

The following medicinal products may reduce the effect of valproic acid:
certain antiepileptics (e.g. phenytoin, phenobarbital, primidone and carbamazepine), medicines against malaria (mefloquine, chloroquine), carbapenem-type antibiotics, and cholestyramine (used to treat high blood fat levels).

Valproic acid does not appear to influence the effect of oral contraceptives (“the pill”).

Taking Convulex with food and drink: Valproic acid may increase the effect of alcohol.

Pregnancy and breast-feeding
If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, think you may be pregnant or are planning to have a baby, you should talk to your health care professional right away for advice before taking this medicine.
You should not take this medicine if you are pregnant or a woman of child-bearing age unless explicitly advised by your doctor. He/she will inform you about the benefits and potential risks of treatment with Convulex. Treatment with Convulex must not be stopped without medical advice.
If you are a woman of child-bearing age, and taking Convulex, you should use effective contraception during treatment.

It is essential that you discuss your treatment with your doctor well before you intend to become pregnant. Taking this medicine during pregnancy may delay your child's cognitive development. There is also a higher risk of birth defects if you take Convulex during pregnancy.

If possible, the dosage of Convulex should be reassessed already before the onset of pregnancy and the lowest effective dose (divided into several administrations per day) should be used in order to minimise the risk of abnormal developments in the child. If indicated, your doctor will prescribe the additional use of folic acid. Taking folic acid supplements before getting pregnant and during early pregnancy has been shown to lower the chance of having a baby with a neural tube defect.

Pregnancy should be carefully monitored by ultrasound and other suitable methods.

The doctor may consider it necessary to have blood tests done in the newborn baby to determine the blood coagulation status.

Driving and using machines
⚠ Caution: Use of this drug may affect the patient's reactivity and ability to drive. This applies especially during combined treatment with other anticonvulsants or certain tranquillisers and narcotics.
Successful seizure control over a period of several months may enable patients to actively participate in road traffic. Your treating physician will inform you whether you may drive a vehicle.

3. HOW TO TAKE CONVULEX

Always take Convulex exactly as your doctor has told you. You should check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.

The capsules should be swallowed whole with some liquid, with or after meals.

Dosage and duration of treatment will be determined individually by your doctor.
For individual dosing purposes, e.g. for finding the adequate dose at the start or adapting dose during treatment, other dosage forms and strengths of Convulex are also available..

Epilepsy:
In general, treatment is started with a lower dose, which is then gradually increased by your doctor until the optimal dose is reached.
As a rule, it is recommended to take the daily dose in several divided doses. However, if only valproic acid is used for the treatment of epilepsy, your doctor may tell you to administer the total daily dose once a day in the evening.

Monotherapy:
Adults: At the start of treatment 600 mg valproic acid per day are administered (this corresponds to 2 Convulex 300 mg Capsules per day). Dosage is then gradually increased by 5–10 mg valproic acid per kg body weight at 3–7 day intervals until seizure control is achieved. This is usually possible in a dosage range of approximately 1000 mg to 2000 mg valproic acid per day ((corresponds to 3–7 Convulex 300 mg Capsules

per day). If adequate control cannot be achieved within this range, your doctor may further increase your dose up to 2500 mg valproic acid per day.

Children: In children treatment is started at a daily dosage of 10–20 mg valproic acid per kg body weight, and then gradually increased to a maintenance dose in the range of 20–30 mg valproic acid per kg body weight per day. In individual cases your doctor may prescribe doses higher than 40 mg valproic acid per kg body weight per day.

Children who need doses above 40 mg valproic acid/kg/day may require regular laboratory tests as prescribed by the doctor.
For children weighing less than 20 kg, other presentations of Convulex (for example oral solution or syrup) are also available.

The following table serves as a general dosage guideline:

Age	Body weight	Average dose
3–6 months	approx. 5.5–7.5 kg	150 mg per day
6–12 months	approx. 7.5–10 kg	150–300 mg per day
1–3 years	approx. 10–15 kg	300–450 mg per day
3–6 years	approx. 15–20 kg	450–600 mg per day
7–11 years	approx. 20–40 kg	600–1200 mg per day
12–17 years	approx. 40–60 kg	1000–1500 mg per day
Adults (including elderly patients)	approx. 60 kg or more	1200–2100 mg per day

If appropriate, patients with disturbed kidney and/or liver function will be prescribed a lower dose by their treating physician.

Combination therapy: If you are already taking medicines against epilepsy and Convulex is newly added to your therapy, you must follow your doctor's instructions very carefully.

Bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness): (adult patients only)
The starting dosage is between 600 and 900 mg (2–3 Convulex 300 mg Capsules) per day, divided into several doses. Depending on the severity of symptoms, the doctor may prescribe up to 1500 mg per day (corresponds to 5 Convulex 300 mg Capsules). The doctor may gradually increase your dose on the basis of the concentration of active substance measured in the blood.

Migraine: (adult patients only)
Starting with 300 mg per day (1 Convulex 300 mg Capsule), the daily dosage is slowly raised according to your doctor's instructions. Most patients require dosages between 600 and 900 mg per day (2–3 Convulex 300 mg Capsules).

If you take more Convulex than you should
Symptoms of acute overdose may include nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sometimes also serious side effects on the part of the central nervous system and breathing difficulty. In serious cases immediate medical assistance is required.

If you forget to take Convulex
Do not take a double dose to make up for a forgotten dose, but continue treatment as prescribed.

If you stop taking Convulex
Do not stop taking this product without talking to your health care professional. Stopping such treatment suddenly can cause serious and life-threatening medical problems. For example, the sudden discontinuation of Convulex in pregnant women with seizures can result in persistent seizures, which can cause harm, including death, to the mother and/or the unborn baby.

Discuss any questions or concerns on the use of this medicine with your health care professional.

4. POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

Like all medicines, Convulex can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them.

The side effects are grouped according to body systems and to the frequency of their occurrence:
"very common": occurred in more than 1 in 10 patients
"common": occurred in less than 1 in 10, but more than 1 in 100 patients
"uncommon": occurred in less than 1 in 100, but more than 1 in 1000 patients
"rare": occurred in less than 1 in 1000, but more than 1 in 10,000 patients
"very rare": occurred in less than 1 in 10,000 patients

Blood: Especially in case of excessively high doses, treatment with valproic acid may cause transitory anomalies of the blood count or blood clotting disturbances. In case of increased tendency to bleed or unusually frequent occurrence of bruises, inform your doctor.

Nervous system: Occasionally disturbed coordination of movements, dizziness and trembling have been reported. Drowsiness may occur occasionally, but is mostly seen when other antiepileptics are used at the same time; rarely it also occurs during monotherapy at the beginning of treatment. Rare cases of lethargy or states of confusion (occasionally followed by disturbed consciousness and sometimes associated with hallucinations or convulsions) have been reported. Very rarely, transient loss of consciousness has been observed. If you notice any of these or similar symptoms, contact a doctor as quickly as possible.
Very rare cases of depressed states, parkinsonism or dementia have been reported.
The effects described above are generally transitory and usually reverse when treatment is stopped.
An increase in alertness may occur. This is generally considered a positive effect, but occasionally symptoms such as hyperactivity, aggression or other behavioural disturbances have been reported.
Rarely, partly reversible tinnitus and partly reversible impairment of hearing have been reported. However, there is no evidence of a causal relationship with valproic acid treatment.
Rarely headache and twitching of the eyes may occur.

Gastrointestinal tract: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, lack of appetite or constipation may occur at the beginning of treatment. During treatment, increased appetite leading to weight gain has also been reported.
In very rare cases an inflammation of the pancreas may occur, which may take a life-threatening course in serious cases (see section 2. under "Other things you should know before starting treatment with Convulex").

Kidneys: There have been isolated reports of a reversible kidney disorder.

Skin: Rarely, oedema (accumulation of fluid in tissue) has been reported. Transient hair loss has been noted in some patients. Acne and excessive growth of facial or body hair have been observed in very rare cases. Rarely skin changes have occurred, e.g. rash or, in exceptional cases, more serious skin reactions.

Hormones: In isolated cases, menstrual irregularities in women and increased breast growth in men may occur.

Metabolism: Vomiting, disturbed coordination of movements and progressive clouding of consciousness may be signs of increased ammonia levels in the blood. If such symptoms occur, consult a doctor immediately.

Immune system: Occasionally vasculitis (inflammation of the blood vessels) was reported, which may present as pain, reddening or itching. Allergic reactions (ranging from rash to hypersensi¬tivity reactions) have been reported. In rare cases, "systemic lupus erythematosus" (a rare immune disorder) has occurred.

Liver and bile: Transient elevation of liver test values may occur at the beginning of treatment. In rare cases severe liver damage may develop, sometimes taking a fatal course (see section 2. under "Other things you should know before starting treatment with Convulex").
Rarely porphyria (a rare metabolic disease) has been reported.

Report any side effects you experience to your health care professional. This includes any possible side effects not listed in this leaflet.

5. HOW TO STORE CONVULEX

Do not store above 25°C. Do not refrigerate or freeze. Store in the original package in order to protect from light. Keep out of the reach and sight of children. Do not use the medicine after the expiry date which is stated on the carton. The expiry date refers to the last day of that month.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

What Convulex 300 mg Capsules contain
- The active substance is valproic acid. 1 capsule contains 300 mg valproic acid.
- The other ingredients are Karion 83, glycerol 85%, gelatine, titanium dioxide (E 171), ferric oxide red (E 172), hydrochloric acid, shellac, ferric oxide black (E 172), methacrylic acid-ethylacrylate copolymer (1:1) dispersion 30%, triethyl citrate, Macrogol 6000, glycerol monostearate 45-55 type II.

What Convulex looks like and contents of the pack
Old rose coloured, oval-shaped gelatine capsules with enteric coating and imprint "300".

Pack size: 60 and 100 capsules.

Marketing Authorisation Holder:
Gerot Pharmazeutika Ges.m.b.H., Arnethgasse 3, 1160 Vienna, Austria

Manufacturer:
G.L. Pharma GmbH, Industriestrasse 1, 8502 Lannach, Austria

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The following information is intended for medical or healthcare professionals only:

Advice for doctors on the treatment of an overdose:
Hospital management of overdose including induced vomiting, gastric lavage, assisted ventilation and other measures supporting vital functions are recommended.
Haemodialysis and haemoperfusion have been used successfully. Intravenous naloxone has also been used, sometimes in association with activated charcoal given orally.

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