



Depakote

BQIS Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision making or medical advice. This is the third of ten Fact Sheets regarding psychotropic medications.

Intended Outcomes

Individuals will understand why Depakote is prescribed, how it works, the range and severity of side effects, signs and symptoms that the Depakote level may be too high, how the physician monitors this medicine, and the actions needed to support someone on this medicine.

Definitions

Depakote: A medication used to decrease mood swings and serious aggressive outbursts. It may also be used to control seizures.

Facts

- Depakote is available in:
 - Liquid and tablets (depending on the form given, Depakote should be taken one to four times a day as prescribed)
- This medicine works by decreasing:
 - Mood swings
 - Severe aggressive outbursts
- Common side effects (may decrease after several weeks):
 - Weight gain
 - Upset stomach (may be helped if taken with food) or cramps
 - Sedation/relaxed/sleepiness
 - Decreased coordination
 - Increased body and/or facial hair or hair loss
 - Tremor in the hands
 - Changes in menstrual cycle
 - Acne



- Dangerous side effects (needs to be reported to the physician immediately):
 - Severe agitation
 - Yellowing of skin and/or eyes
 - Brown urine or clay colored stool
 - Swelling of the face or extremities
 - Easy bruising
 - Recurrent infections or illnesses that do not go away
 - Severe stomach pain
 - Vomiting for several hours
 - Skin rash
 - Ulcers in the mouth
 - Confusion
- How the physician monitors this medicine:
 - Blood test on a regular basis to monitor the Depakote level in the blood
 - Blood will also be drawn to check liver function and blood count
 - Blood draw should occur first thing in the morning (prior to the morning dose of Depakote)

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Give medications as prescribed.
2. Watch for anything different/change in status of the individual and for signs and symptoms of medication side effects.
3. Write down any noted signs and symptoms of medication side effects or changes in status of the individual.
4. Communicate noted signs and symptoms of medication side effects or changes in status of the individual to supervisor or nurse immediately.
5. Seek medical attention as indicated according to the seriousness of symptoms as listed above.
6. Watch for the effectiveness of medication by writing down target behavior data that relate to diagnosis.



7. Make sure data for target behaviors is presented to physician or psychiatrist during scheduled appointments.

Learning Assessment

The following questions can be used to verify a person's competency regarding the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. Depakote is used to decrease:
 - A. Depression
 - B. Anxiety
 - C. Mood swings
 - D. Auditory hallucinations
2. Common side effects of Depakote include:
 - A. Weight gain
 - B. Tremors
 - C. Hair loss
 - D. All of the above
3. Dangerous side effects of Depakote include:
 - A. Weight gain
 - B. Confusion
 - C. Easy bruising
 - D. B and C



4. The physician monitors this medication by checking:
 - A. Thyroid
 - B. Sodium
 - C. Glucose
 - D. Liver function

5. To help monitor the condition of someone receiving Depakote, it is important to do all of the following except:
 - A. Watch for any changes in the individual
 - B. Write down observations of possible side effects of medication
 - C. Report to your supervisor on how the individual is doing every other month
 - D. Take target behavior data to medical appointments for the physician/psychiatrist review



References

Epilepsy Foundation. Divalproex Sodium. Retrieved 08/01/2015 from <http://www.epilepsy.com/medications/divalproex-sodium>.

Mayo Clinic. Divalproex Sodium. Retrieved 08/01/2015 from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-supplements/divalproex-sodium-oral-route/description/drg-20072886>.

National Alliance on Mental Illness. Valproate (Depakote). Retrieved 08/01/2015 from [https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Treatment/Mental-Health-Medications/Valproate-\(Depakote\)](https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Treatment/Mental-Health-Medications/Valproate-(Depakote)).

Related Resources

Psychiatric Medication Series Fact Sheets: “Atypical Antipsychotics”, “Typical Antipsychotics”, “Lithium”, “SSRIs and SNRIs”, and “Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome”

Learning Assessment Answers

1. C
2. D
3. D
4. D
5. C