DRUG NAME: KEPPRA
Generic name: levetiracetam

General Information: Keppra is an anticonvulsant drug used to treat epilepsy. Though “off-label” and not officially approved by the FDA, it is also used to treat the manic phase of bipolar disorder and for long-term stabilization of mood in bipolar disorder, often in combination with other medications. The therapeutic mechanism of Keppra is not clearly understood, but it is known to slow the firing rate of brain cells. Keppra is not thought to be habit-forming, but studies of its habit-forming potential have not been done in humans.

Guidelines for Use: Keppra is available in 250, 500, 750, and 1000 mg. tablets and in liquid form. Tablets are scored and may be broken to adjust dosage. No generic form is available. The usual starting dose of Keppra is 500 mg. twice daily. It may be taken with or without food. Doses may be increased slowly to control symptoms up to a usual maximum of 3000 mg. total daily dose, sometimes higher. Improvement may be evident in 7 to 10 days, but it can take several more weeks to reach maximum benefit. There is no need for monitoring of blood levels of Keppra.

If you forget to take this medication but remember within a few hours, take it when you remember. Otherwise, wait until your next dose. Do not take double doses. Store the drug in a dry, tightly-closed, light-resistant container out of the reach of children.

Side Effects of Keppra:

Common side effects: notify your clinician if severe. These side effects usually taper off over time. They are more likely at higher doses.

--GI effects: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, abdominal pain
--drowsiness, fatigue, insomnia
--difficulties with concentration, speech or language
--dizziness, unsteady gait, incoordination, muscle weakness, tremor
--double vision, visual changes

Keppra does not usually cause weight gain.

In clinical studies, about 2.5% of Keppra users develop hyponatremia (low sodium levels in the blood), usually but not always in the first three months of treatment. Most had no symptoms and hyponatremia caused no particular problems. Those people who had symptoms returned to normal within days of stopping or reducing the dosage of Keppra without any other specific treatment. IF YOU DEVELOP SYMPTOMS OF PERSISTENT NAUSEA, HEADACHE, LETHARGY, CONFUSION, FEELING UNWELL OR A DECREASE IN CONSCIOUSNESS, RESTRICT FLUIDS AND CALL YOUR PROVIDER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
**Precautions:** Do not take this drug if you have ever had an allergic reaction or a rash with Keppra or with carbamazepine (Tegretol), a related drug. Inform your clinician if you have any known drug allergies; if you have ever had seizures or been diagnosed with epilepsy or abnormalities of sodium in the bloodstream; if you are taking any other drug (prescription or non-prescription), vitamin, supplement, or herb; if you are undergoing anesthesia or surgery while taking this drug. **Inform your clinician if you are or might become pregnant.** Keppra is known to cause fetal abnormalities; it should not be taken by pregnant women, and is recommended for nursing mothers only if there are no good alternative drug treatments. Children are prescribed Keppra at times. Elderly patients may need lower doses due to slowed metabolism of the drug.

**This drug often causes drowsiness and dizziness, especially early in treatment.** If so, avoid driving or operating machinery until you are sure your coordination and alertness allow for safe operation.

Do not discontinue this drug without consulting with your clinician. You should be closely monitored for the re-emergence of symptoms when Keppra is stopped. Some people have discontinuation symptoms including dizziness, drowsiness, abnormal gait, nausea, vomiting, visual changes, headache, and tremor if Keppra is stopped abruptly.

Overdoses of Keppra have not been fatal to date. **NONETHELESS, YOU SHOULD SEEK IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE IN CASES OF OVERDOSE, PARTICULARLY IF MULTIPLE DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL ARE SUSPECTED.**

**Interactions:**

**Alcohol:** Use of alcohol in combination with Keppra is not recommended due to additive sedation. You should drink very sparingly, if at all, while taking this drug.

**Food/beverages:** No restrictions.

**Other drugs:**

KEPPRA MAY DECREASE THE BLOOD LEVEL OF BIRTH CONTROL PILLS, WHICH COULD RESULT IN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY. **YOU SHOULD USE NON-HORMONAL BIRTH CONTROL METHODS WHILE TAKING KEPPRA.**

The blood level of these drugs or of Keppra may be affected when they are given together: phenytoin (Dilantin), carbamazepine (Tegretol), phenobarbital, valproic acid (Depakote), verapamil, and felodipine (Lexxel, Plendil). Be sure to inform your clinician if you are prescribed any of these drugs in addition to Keppra.

Keppra may increase the effects of other sedating medications such as antihistamines, sedatives, narcotic pain medicines, muscle relaxants, barbiturates, and anesthetics. Check with your clinician before taking these medications.