

March 18, 2016

RE: divalproex sodium (Epival) shortage

Dear Colleagues,

Please update information about the shortage of Divalproex Sodium on your websites and social media pages. This is a moving target as the shortage evolves. Currently, there is a large effort being made to resolve the problem. There may be frequent updates over the next few weeks.

Suzanne Nurse, Chair of the Drug Shortages Committee, has been working with Health Canada, the Provincial/Territorial Drug Shortage Task Team and various groups and organizations including manufacturers, distributors, Canadian League Against Epilepsy Medical Therapeutics Committee, Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Pharmacists Association and others as mitigation strategies are being implemented. The goal is to get stock levels of this drug back on track for those who need this medication.

Members of the CEA/ACE Drug Shortages Committee met with Dr. Jeremy Desai, President and CEO of Apotex Inc., at the end of February. The prolonged shortage of Apo-Divalproex has had a significant impact on the overall supply of divalproex sodium (Epival). We have also had discussions with Teva Canada Ltd. and will be arranging a meeting in the near future. Production of Teva-Divalproex has been increased while Apotex has been off line.

Last week, Health Canada arranged a teleconference of all parties to assess the shortage and develop steps to address it. There was a follow-up call at the end of the week and there has been frequent communication on the issue with Health Canada and other groups – see statement below from Health Canada.

*"We recognize the seriousness of this shortage and the challenges it presents to patients and their health practitioners who rely on access to divalproex to stabilize their condition. We are working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders - including drug manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, provincial and territorial governments and stakeholder organizations like the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance to coordinate an effective solution."*

~ Officials with Health Canada's Health Products and Food Branch

Updates:

Teva Canada Ltd. will be releasing several batches of generic product, Teva-Divalproex, over the coming weeks. Each resupply will help, and there is more scheduled to be coming behind it. Teva Canada Ltd. has released a detailed statement describing the company's plan (see attachment).

Apotex Inc. and Health Canada are working to resolve the Apo-Divalproex shortage and more information is expected in the next few weeks regarding availability of this product.

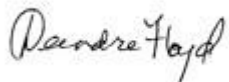
The available supply is being shared across the system. Pharmacists may provide partial refills during this time to help the greatest number of patients maintain access to this important medication.

The availability of generic divalproex sodium is expected to improve over the coming weeks.

Brand name divalproex sodium (Epival) is expected to remain in shortage for several more months. The estimated resupply date for all strengths of Epival is July 22. Based on this estimate, it would reach pharmacies in late July or early August.

If you are contacted by anyone who cannot get their medication refilled, please get in touch with the Drug Shortages Committee.

Sincerely,



Deirdre Floyd  
President



**To help your clients we suggest to advise them of the following:**

There is a serious shortage of divalproex sodium (Epival) in Canada and there are significant efforts underway to resolve this drug shortage.

The availability of generic divalproex sodium is expected to improve over the next 6-8 weeks.

People who take divalproex sodium (Epival) to control their seizures should continue to follow the treatment instructions provided by their healthcare provider and pharmacist. Do not ration medication by skipping doses or taking less than the prescribed amount.

If your medication is due to be refilled soon, check with your pharmacist and ask about the availability of divalproex sodium at your drug store.

If your pharmacist is unable to locate any divalproex sodium for you, contact your healthcare provider to discuss alternative treatment options while this drug is in short supply.

Continue working with your pharmacist and your health care provider until the situation is resolved in order to manage your epilepsy disorder in the safest, most effective way possible.

If you have been prescribed a different drug, due to unavailability of your regular tablets, make sure the dosing instructions are clear. Ask questions if there is anything you don't understand. If you are confused or have concerns, tell your pharmacist.

Do you need help? If you have questions about drug shortages or need help, contact your local epilepsy association by calling 1-866-EPILEPSY (1-866-374-5377).

If you are concerned about this situation, take a few minutes to write to your Member of Parliament and provincial representative (MPP, MNA, MHA or MLA) and share your concerns. Explain how a drug shortage affects you and your family.

Find your Member of Parliament (MP)

<http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/ParlInfo/Compilations/HouseofCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>

Find your provincial representative

<http://www.canadaspeaks.ca/resources/find-your-mpp/>

The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance/Alliance canadienne de l'épilepsie is committed to helping people with epilepsy maintain access to a safe, consistent and reliable supply of medication. There should not be shortages of antiseizure medications. We will continue to advocate for prevention of drug shortages and improved management when shortages can't be averted.

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Questions about drug shortages?

Contact your local epilepsy agency or call 1-866-EPILEPSY (866-374-5377)