

Checklist for Women with Epilepsy

Working with your Health Care Team



Women and girls with epilepsy have unique health issues that may be affected by their epilepsy or by treatments used to control seizures. To make sure these health issues are addressed properly, review this checklist with your health care team. Girls and women of all ages should review topics which are important for their health with the epilepsy team annually and as needed.

For All Women, Adolescents, and Pre-Teens during Reproductive Years



- Know your seizure type and risks
- Ask about possible relationship between hormones and epilepsy
- Track all seizures and possible triggers (e.g. sleep, illness, new medications)
- Track relationship between menstrual cycle & seizures
- Ask about impact of epilepsy on sexuality, fertility, and reproduction
- Learn how some anti-seizure medications (ASMs) affect sexual desire and function
- Know the importance of careful pregnancy planning and use of folate (folic acid)
- Birth control and ASMs
 - Interactions between hormonal contraception and certain ASMs
 - Hormonal contraception with estrogen lowers lamotrigine levels
 - Some ASMs (phenytoin, carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, perampanel) may interfere with hormonal contraception – leads to higher risk of unplanned pregnancy
 - Long-acting forms of contraception (IUD) may be an option if using an ASM that interacts with hormonal contraception
 - Inform neurologist of changes in contraception
- Maintain good bone health
- Recognize the importance of diet, exercise, and sleep

Women Planning to Become Pregnant

- Know your seizure type and risks
- Track all seizures and possible triggers
- Aim for the best seizure control possible **before** pregnancy
- Understand risks to mother and baby - women not taking ASMs also have risks
- Ask about ways to lower risks for mother and baby (eg, ASMs, folic acid, healthy lifestyle)
- Talk to your neurologist/epilepsy specialist about medication changes before pregnancy
- Keep a regular medication schedule and avoid missed doses
- Find an obstetrician who is comfortable treating a woman with epilepsy
- Talk to your neurologist and obstetrician about the amount of folic acid needed before pregnancy - dose may need to be higher if you are taking certain ASMs
- Know how pregnancy can affect seizure frequency and severity
- Talk to epilepsy and fertility specialists if fertility treatments are needed - some may affect ASM levels and seizures
- Remember to share the news of your pregnancy with your epilepsy team immediately



Pregnant Women

- Know your seizure type and risks
- Keep track of all seizures and triggers - report changes right away
- Understand risks of possible birth defects and developmental problems
- Take folic acid and prenatal vitamins as prescribed
- Talk to your neurologist/epilepsy specialist about possible changes in ASMs during pregnancy - you will need close monitoring of blood levels
- Work with OB and epilepsy team for prenatal testing
- Ask about possible Vitamin K for mother before delivery and to baby at birth
- Ask about bringing your ASMs and medicine instructions to the hospital during labor
- Update your Seizure Response Plan to include changes in ASMs during and after pregnancy
- Develop a plan with your neurologist for monitoring ASM levels after delivery – dose changes may be needed
- Know breastfeeding options – it is safe for women taking most ASMs
- Develop a safety plan with health care providers for care of newborn
- Ask about tips for parenting safely - sleep, home safety, infant care, safety during seizures, support from loved ones



Women beyond Childbearing Years

- Know your seizure type and risks
- Keep track of all seizures and triggers - report changes
- Bone health - bone density monitoring, need for Vitamin D screening and supplementation, calcium or other treatment if needed
- Maximize seizure control and home safety evaluations to prevent injuries and falls
- Learn about possible hormonal effects of perimenopause and menopause on seizures and ASMs
- Ask about hormone replacement therapy and possible impact on some ASMs
- Talk about sexuality changes

Where can I learn more?

- To learn more about women living with epilepsy, visit www.epilepsy.com/women
- Call the Epilepsy & Seizures Helpline at 1-800-332-1000 or visit www.epilepsy.com/helpline

This discussion checklist was adapted from the Epilepsy Therapy Project and epilepsy.com Discussion Checklist.

About the Epilepsy Foundation: The Epilepsy Foundation, and its network of 50 organizations throughout the United States, leads the fight to overcome the challenges of living with epilepsy and to accelerate therapies to stop seizures, find cures, and save lives. To learn more, please visit epilepsy.com.

Disclaimer: This publication is designed to provide general information about epilepsy and seizures to the public. It is not intended as medical advice. People with epilepsy should not make changes to treatment or activities based on this information without first consulting with their health care provider.

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