

Epilepsy in Females

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Folic Acid Deficiency: Is associated with higher rates of fetal malformations, spontaneous abortions and placental abruption in all women. **Folic acid supplementation** (0.8 - 5 mg / day) was found to decrease anti-epileptic drug related fetal malformations (Biale 1984, Dansky 1987). A subsequent small study suggests folic acid does not protect the fetus from mal-development. Future large studies are needed for a better understanding of the relationship between folic acid and fetal developmental effects of antiepileptic medications (Neurology Reviews, Oct.1999). Some anti-epileptic medications **interfere with folic acid absorption and metabolism** in the body so supplementation makes good sense. Folic Acid also has several other positive health effects including to help prevent pre-term labor. In the mean time, it is recommended that menstruating females with epilepsy taking antiepileptic medications should **take 1 - 4 mg of folic acid (folate) daily**.

Lamotrigine:	folic acid antagonists
Phenytoin:	folic acid antagonists
Valproic acid:	inhibits conversion of folic acid to active metabolite folinic acid by blocking action of glutamate formyltransferase
Folic acid may	decrease phenytoin (Dilantin) levels

Contraception: if considering use of contraception, be aware that these medications can interaction with AEDs causing lower AED levels and possibly more seizures. Also, some AEDs may lower the effect of contraception. Consult an OB-Gyn specialist.

Care During Pregnancy: Pregnancy in an epileptic women is considered a **high risk pregnancy** regardless whether she's taking anti-seizure medications or not. Mom and fetus are at risk of injury or death from seizures so they must be followed closely by both an obstetrician and a neurologist. As mom's body changes throughout the pregnancy, the amount of active seizure medicine also changes and must be followed closely with frequent blood tests and office visits. The decision to continue mom on seizure medicine **must** be made by mom, her parents (if she's a minor) and the neurologist. Abruptly stopping medicines can cause seizure recurrence (especially life threatening prolonged seizures called Status Epilepticus) which may be more harmful to mom and fetus than the seizure medicine itself.

Updated January 30, 2011