

Epilepsy and Pregnancy

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

What do I need to know about pregnancy and epilepsy? Women with epilepsy can have a safe and healthy pregnancy. Epilepsy and epilepsy medicine may make it more difficult to become pregnant. Epilepsy and epilepsy medicine may also make it difficult to manage pregnancy. Pregnancy may cause an increase or decrease in the amount of seizures. Careful planning with doctor can decrease risks to patient and baby.

How may epilepsy affect pregnancy?

- A seizure during pregnancy can cause injury to patient or baby. During a seizure, the level of oxygen to baby may decrease. This may cause brain or organ damage. A seizure may also cause preterm labor, preterm birth, or miscarriage.
- Epilepsy medicine increases the risk for birth defects.
- During pregnancy, patient body may react differently to epilepsy medicine. The medicine may not stay in patient's body as long. This may increase risk for a seizure. Patient's dose may be changed multiple times during pregnancy.

How baby will be monitored during pregnancy?

Regular ultrasounds will help to monitor baby. Doctor need to monitor baby's heart or nervous system properly.

What will happen if patient have a seizure during labor?

Patient will be given epilepsy medicine through an IV if she get a seizure during labor or delivery. The medicine may make baby more sleepy than normal when he is born. He will be monitored closely after birth for any side effects of the medicine.

Will it be safe to breastfeed baby?

Some epileptic medicines are released from the body through breast milk. Baby may be exposed to epilepsy medicine. The medicine may make baby more sleepy than normal. Breast milk may prevent infections or learning problems in baby. These benefits may outweigh the risks of breastfeeding baby while patient take epilepsy medicine.

How can we care during pregnancy?

- **Take epilepsy medicine every day at the same time.** Do not skip a dose. Correct use of medicine will lower risk for a seizure during pregnancy.
- **Take folic acid and prenatal vitamins as directed.** Epilepsy medicine may decrease the amount of folic acid in patient's body. Folic acid may decrease baby's risks for birth defects. Patient may need a larger dose in the first 3 months of pregnancy.
- **Keep all appointments for blood tests.** Blood tests will help doctor to decide what dose of epilepsy medicine patient need. The right dose will prevent seizures and birth defects in baby. Doctor may need to change the dose of medicine frequently throughout pregnancy.

- **Do not drink alcohol or use drugs.** This may harm baby and increase patients risk for seizures.
- **Get plenty of rest.** A lack of sleep may increase risk for a seizure. Advice frequent naps throughout the day if she feel tired.
- **Manage stress during pregnancy.** Too much stress can trigger a seizure. Meditate, do prenatal yoga, or do any activity that helps to relax.

More tips to remember:

- Seeing the doctor before becoming pregnant, keeping regular appointments, and checking antiepileptic drug blood levels during pregnancy are recommended.
- Taking the appropriate medications as prescribed, as well as having adequate rest and sleep are of utmost importance.
- Paying attention to nutrition with adequate weight gain and taking a multivitamin and additional folate before, during, and after pregnancy are needed.
- Avoiding cigarettes, alcohol, and caffeine are important for all women during pregnancy.
- Keeping all these factors in mind, the overwhelming majority of women with epilepsy will have a normal healthy baby.

Reference:

Micromedex's Care Notes System Online 2.0