**Health and wellness**

**Women of child-bearing years who take seizure medicines need to take a daily folic acid supplement.** Folic acid reduces the risk of some birth defects should an unplanned pregnancy occur.

Seizures can affect daily living, self-esteem and freedom in daily activities. Talk to your doctor if you have depression, trouble sleeping, trouble eating or functioning. A referral for personal and/or family counseling may help to address quality of life issues. Seek out support groups to share experiences, frustrations and tips on how to cope with seizures.

**Pregnancy**

Over 90 percent of women with epilepsy have normal, healthy babies. *Talk to your doctors before you get pregnant* to learn the health risks with your type of epilepsy and the medicines you are taking. You and your doctor can then create a plan to ensure a healthy pregnancy for you and your baby.

To prepare for a healthy pregnancy:

- Your doctor will prescribe the safest seizure medicine and dose for you and your baby. **Take your seizure medicines as prescribed.** Do NOT stop taking your medicines. Uncontrolled seizures are dangerous for you and your baby because of the risk of falls and low oxygen. *If you have a seizure, tell your doctor as soon as possible.*

During pregnancy:

- Begin taking prenatal vitamins with folic acid at least 1 month before you get pregnant. Folic acid reduces the risk of some birth defects.

**Risk of seizures in the child**

The risk that your child will develop epilepsy is only about 5 percent unless you have a clear hereditary form of epilepsy. If you are worried that your epilepsy is a hereditary form, ask to speak with a genetic counselor.
Breastfeeding

Talk to your doctor about your medicines and breastfeeding. For most women with epilepsy, breastfeeding is a safe and beneficial choice.

Only small amounts of seizure medicines are secreted in breast milk, often much less than the baby was exposed to in the womb. Work with your baby’s doctor and a lactation consultant to meet your baby’s nutritional needs.

Continue to take your prenatal vitamins while breastfeeding.

Birth control

All methods of birth control can safely be used by women with epilepsy. These include:

- Intrauterine devices (IUD)
- Hormone implants
- Hormone injections
- Condoms
- Birth control pills
- Diaphragms

Talk to your doctor about your medicines, and your choice for birth control. Some seizure medicines may make birth control pills less effective. This could result in an unplanned pregnancy. If you take any of the medicines below, talk to your doctor about changing your method of birth control:

- Phenytoin (Dilantin)
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- Topiramate (Topamax, Topiragen, Trokendi XR) (more than 200mg)
- Oxcarbazepine (Triletal)

Menopause

Your seizure medicine and dose may need to change as you age.

Some seizure medicines can cause mineral loss from bone. This can result in bone loss called osteoporosis and bone fractures. These medicines include:

- Phenytoin (Dilantin)
- Carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- Phenobarbital (Luminal)
- Primidone (Mysoline)
- Divalporex (Depakote)

To prevent bone loss:

- Eat a diet high in calcium and vitamin D.
- Do weight-bearing exercises such as walking, dancing, tennis and weight training.
- Avoid alcohol and smoking.
- Discuss use of hormone replacement therapy with your doctor.

For more information

- Patient Education handout “Seizures”
- Epilepsy Foundation, www.epilepsyfoundation.org