

# Planning for Pregnancy WOMEN WITH EPILEPSY

## Background

People who have seizures are said to have epilepsy. Women with epilepsy face some special concerns before and during pregnancy. Most women with epilepsy have normal pregnancies with healthy babies. Planning for pregnancy can help you and your baby be as healthy as possible.

## How Epilepsy Affects Pregnancy

Women with epilepsy may have more trouble getting pregnant. On the other hand, some seizure medicines can cause birth control pills to not work as well. Women who do become pregnant also have a slightly higher chance for miscarriage, pregnancy problems, and fetal death. Talk with your health care provider about your medicines and pregnancy.

## How Pregnancy Affects Epilepsy

About one third of women have more seizures while they are pregnant. Having a seizure during pregnancy could be dangerous to both you and your baby. Seizures may also be more difficult to control. You may need to see your health care provider more often during pregnancy.

## How Medications for Epilepsy May Affect Pregnancy

Some seizure medications can lead to problems for the baby including certain birth defects. Taking a multivitamin with folic acid can lower the chance that the baby could have a serious type of birth defect known as spina bifida. If you take valproic acid or any other medicines for your seizures, talk with your health care provider about how much folic acid to take. Talk with your health care provider before you become pregnant about the best medication and dose for you.

## What You Can Do

- 1) Talk with your health care provider if you are thinking about becoming pregnant. The type or dose of your medicines may need to be changed.*
- 2) Before pregnancy, talk with your health care provider about possible risks for the baby.*
- 3) Take multivitamins with folic acid (folate) before you become pregnant.*
- 4) Get enough sleep.*
- 5) Keep taking your seizure medicine as prescribed when you are pregnant.*



*Developed by the WAPC Preconception and Prenatal Care Committee, revised 1/15*

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This information is available on the WAPC Web site at [www.perinatalweb.org](http://www.perinatalweb.org).

Funded in part by the MCH Title V Services Block Grant, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Perinatal Foundation.