

- If no-one is with you, sponging baby on a change mat on the floor is safer than bathing.
- Use family support as much as possible in the early days to enable you to get extra rest.
- If your medication was increased during pregnancy it may need to be reduced after baby is born.

Contraception (delaying your next pregnancy)

Some AEM's can make the contraceptive pill or implant work less well, and some contraceptives can affect how well your AEMs work, so discuss your best options with your Specialist.

For more information contact

Epilepsy New Zealand

www.epilepsy.org.nz

Ph. 0800 37 45 37

Email: national@epilepsy.org.nz

Ph. 09 573 5772

Patient Code of Rights

Your Code of Rights

- Respect and Privacy
- Fair Treatment
- Dignity and Independence
- Proper Standards
- Effective Communication
- Information
- Your choice and Decisions
- Support
- Rights during teaching and research
- Your complains taken seriously



Women's Health

Epilepsy and Pregnancy



www.countiesmanukauhealth.org.nz

	Department: Women's Health	Updated: March 2020
	Approved by: Chief Midwife	Review: March 2020
	Owner: D. Miles, Specialist Midwife	

A guide for women and whaanau



Women's Health Division

Epilepsy and Pregnancy

Most women with epilepsy will have a normal pregnancy.

It is best to see a Specialist **before** getting pregnant. This is an opportunity to talk about your epilepsy control, any effects your **anti-epileptic medication (AEM)** may have on your developing baby and any extra care that is recommended when you become pregnant.

Occasionally, it may be advised to change your medication before pregnancy.

A free Specialist appointment can be arranged through your Family Doctor.

Do not stop taking your medications without discussing this with a Specialist.

Will I have more seizures when I am pregnant?

Most women will **not** have more seizures during pregnancy.

Seizures can be dangerous for you and your baby.

Emotional stress, being over tired, or drinking alcohol can cause seizures and should be avoided (alcohol should always be avoided in pregnancy).

So sleep, and continuing to take your medication as prescribed are important.

The goal is to be seizure-free in pregnancy and this means some women may need to increase their medication.

Will my baby be normal?

Most women with epilepsy have healthy children, but the risks of birth defects are slightly increased if you are on AEM, which is why it is important to have regular antenatal care and a detailed scan at around 20 weeks.

Other tests or scans may be recommended.

Occasionally, some families will have a tendency to developing epilepsy.

Do I need any other medication during pregnancy?

All women are advised to take a supplement called Folic Acid before pregnancy and up till 12 weeks.

This is to help prevent a Neural Tube Defect (NTD) which is a problem with baby's spine development.

Some AEM's can increase the risk of a NTD and you may need to take a higher dose of Folic Acid, and to keep taking it all pregnancy.

What about labour?

Many women worry about having a seizure in labour but it is not common. 1-2% of women with epilepsy will have a seizure during labour or in the 24 hours following birth.

For this reason we do not recommend a homebirth or labouring in water.

For most women, epilepsy will not affect their

labour and birth experience.

Continue taking your medication as usual during labour.

We recommend your baby has a Vitamin K injection after birth. Vitamin K is important for helping blood to clot.

Some AEM medication can affect the level of Vitamin K in the body, putting baby at risk of bleeding problems after birth.

Vitamin K is routinely offered to all new-borns in New Zealand.

Will I be able to Breastfeed?

Breastfeeding is valuable for all women and their babies. In most cases breastfeeding is safe and the best option, but any breastfeeding concerns should be discussed with your midwife.

Some AEM medications can make baby sleepy, so make sure baby is feeding often enough (lots of wet nappies and weight gain show that all is well).

Postnatal Safety Tips

The first few weeks after baby is born are the time you may be most at risk of having seizures.

This is due to hormonal changes and lack of sleep.

- Be aware of where you are feeding and changing baby.
You do not want baby to fall if you have a seizure.
Close to, or on, the floor with cushions around you may be the best option.