

Breastfeeding or chestfeeding your baby

Your milk is the best food for your baby. Some people worry about how seizure medicines affect the milk and baby. While a small amount can enter human milk, it is not enough to cause harm.



Ways to continue with breastfeeding or chestfeeding:

- To help you get one good stretch of sleep, hand express or pump after feeds and save the milk. Have a support person give your saved milk to your baby while you sleep.
- No support person? Consider a nanny or doula services. Can't afford a doula? Ask your doctor to refer you for a volunteer doula.
- If you take your seizure medicine one time every day, try to take it at the beginning of your baby's longest sleep time. This is usually right after the bedtime feeding.
- If you take your seizure medicine more than one time a day, feed your baby right before you take your medicine. This is when the drug level is likely the lowest.

We use 'breastfeed' and 'chestfeed'. You might prefer a different word such as 'nurse'. Tell us the word you prefer.

Contact your doctor or epilepsy care team as soon as possible if you notice any of these signs that your baby might be getting greater amounts of the seizure medicine through your milk:

- more sleepy than usual
- a weaker suck while feeding
- not gaining weight

Did you know? How babies feed can affect how their brains grow and develop, including how well they think, speak, and solve problems. Research shows that children who were breastfed or chestfed as babies do better, compared to those who were not. Results are even better when a baby is breastfed or chestfeed for more than 6 months.

Resources for Infant Feeding
Fraser Health patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca



How to hold babies safely skin to skin – search “safe skin-to-skin with your baby”

How to increase your milk supply – search “increasing milk supply”



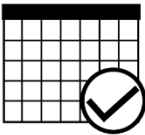
MotherToBaby – about medication in pregnancy and lactation - search “seizure” mothertobaby.org

LactMed® - a medical site about breastfeeding and medicines
tinyurl.com/nihlactmed



Keeping appointments

Keep regular appointments with your epilepsy care team.



Write down the dates and times for all your appointments. This helps you keep track both your appointments and those for your baby.

Living with Epilepsy
After the Birth
of a Baby



Congratulations on the birth of your baby!

Here's how to keep you and baby safe while living with epilepsy.

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Catalogue #268117 (August 2023)
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Changing seizure medicine dose

After a pregnancy, the amount of seizure medicine you need can change. Usually, the dose needs to be lowered.



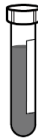
Some medicines, such as levetiracetam and lamotrigine, can be lowered quickly. Other medicines, such as carbamazepine and clobazam, need to be lowered more slowly. Ask your neurologist or family practitioner about how your seizure medicine dose might change.

Never change the dose on your own. This could trigger a seizure.

Watch for signs of having high drug levels such as blurry or double vision, or being very sleepy. Contact your doctor right away if you notice any signs and go get your drug levels checked.

Getting blood levels checked

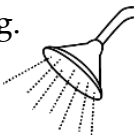
Usually, your blood levels are checked the day after baby is born. This helps guide how best to lower the dose. Sometimes, doses are lowered without checking blood levels.



The best time to go for this blood test is in the morning before you take your morning seizure medicine and around the same time you went while you were pregnant. Take your medicine with you so you can take it right after the blood test.

Keeping you safe

Shower. This is safer than bathing.



Keep the door unlocked when you are alone in the bathroom or bedroom. If you need to lock the door, think about using a safety lock so it can be unlocked from the outside in case of emergency.

Only drive if your neurologist has said it is okay.



Keeping baby safe

Bathe your baby only when another adult is close by. If you are alone, use a damp facecloth to clean your baby instead.

Have your baby sleep in their own crib or bassinet. Do not sleep in the same bed as your baby.

Sit on a chair or bed while you spend time with your baby.

Try not to walk around while holding your baby, especially going up or down stairs. If you do need to carry your baby, place them in a baby wrap or carrier.

Change your baby on the floor when possible. This is safer than using a change table. If you do use a change table, secure baby to the change pad with a strap. Consider having another adult close by.

Lowering the chance of seizures

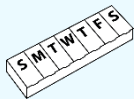
Take your medicines as directed and at the same times every day. This is the best way to lower your chance of seizures.



Use ways to help you remember to take your medicines. It is easy to forget when are not getting enough sleep.

Ways to help you remember:

- Place your medicines in a pill organizer, such as a dosette box. It shows the medicines you still need to take.
- Put a reminder in your phone.
- Ask your pharmacist about other ways to remember.



Watching for depression after pregnancy

It is common to have a low mood or changes in mood at times after a pregnancy. This becomes a concern if the mood changes continue, keep coming back, or prevent you from doing everyday activities.

Ask your healthcare team about your chances of having depression after pregnancy (called postpartum depression). This is important, especially if you had mood changes or depression in the past.

Having epilepsy and a new baby are both very stressful. If you have a low mood, talk with family, friends, and your care team. Don't keep it to yourself.

If you find your mood is staying low or getting worse, contact your family practitioner or another member of your healthcare team.

Read more about depression after pregnancy online. Go to [HereToHelp.bc.ca](https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca) and search "postpartum depression", or scan this QR code.



Sleep and rest as much as possible. When you don't get enough sleep, seizures are more likely to happen. It is best to get at least 4 hours of sleep at a time and aim for at least 6 hours of sleep in 24 hours.



- Try to sleep when your baby sleeps. If you cannot sleep, take the time to lay down and rest.
- Ask friends and family for help. They can help care for your baby and other children so you can get rest.
- Consider getting a babysitter, even when you are home so you can nap or get things done to reduce stress.