

What We Know About Birth Control & Epilepsy

In general, birth control that's safe for the general population is safe for people with epilepsy. However, if you have epilepsy, there are some important additional considerations.

Anti-Seizure Medications (ASMs) and Birth Control Effectiveness

SOME ANTI-SEIZURE MEDICATIONS (ASMS) MAY INTERFERE WITH YOUR BIRTH CONTROL, MAKING YOUR BIRTH CONTROL LESS EFFECTIVE. Meanwhile, some birth control options may interfere with a few of the anti-seizure medications and could impact your seizure control. It's critical to work with your care team to choose the right birth control for you.

The following table provides a list of ASMs by how strongly they interact with some forms of birth control.

Strongly-interacting ASMs (Can make some birth control methods less effective)	Carbamazepine, Cenobamate, Perampanel, Phenobarbital, Phenytoin, Primidone
Mildly-interacting ASMs (Can make some birth control methods less effective, but to a lesser extent to strongly-interacting ASMs)	Clobazam, Eslicarbazepine, Felbamate, Oxcarbazepine, Rufinamide, Topiramate
Non-interacting ASMs (Will NOT make birth control less effective, regardless of the type of birth control)	Brivaracetam, Clonazepam, Ethosuximide, Gabapentin, Lacosamide, Lamotrigine*, Levetiracetam, Pregabalin, Valproic Acid, Zonisamide

**Lamotrigine can have complex interactions, so please check with your epilepsy doctor after choosing.*

Why Choosing the Right Birth Control Option for You Is Important

Effective birth control is especially important for people with epilepsy. Controlling if and when you become pregnant allows you to take steps prior to pregnancy to optimize the health and safety of you and your baby. Given the importance of getting on the best vitamin and ASM regimen prior to pregnancy, the goal is to have a planned pregnancy. Waiting until after the pregnancy begins can be too late to minimize the risks of some ASMs.

Each person's situation is unique. Factors like the specific ASM you're taking, your seizure history, and any other medical conditions you have can influence the best choice of birth control for you.



Use this QR code to visit the Epilepsy & Pregnancy Medical Consortium website for additional tools and resources to help you and your doctors plan for a safe and healthy pregnancy.

Epilepsy and Pregnancy Initiative LLC ("EPI") does not engage in the practice of medicine. Consistent with EPI's mission, EPI has convened a panel of clinician researchers to develop a tool summarizing their research findings on best practice care regarding epilepsy and pregnancy, which EPI is making available as a public resource.

Birth Control Options Affected by Some Specific Anti-Seizure Medications (ASMs)

The table on the right lists the different birth control options and shows which may be impacted by your ASM.

Most Effective Reversible Birth Control Options for People with Epilepsy

- Intrauterine Devices (IUDs): Highly effective birth control that isn't affected by any ASMs
- Depo-Medroxyprogesterone Acetate "Depo": Highly effective birth control possibly affected by strongly-interacting ASMs
- Etonogestrel Implants: Highly effective birth control but its effectiveness may be influenced by ASMs

Anti-seizure Medications (ASMs) Impacted by Birth Control

Birth control that includes estrogen, such as birth control pills, the vaginal ring, and the estrogen patch, will lower the levels of lamotrigine, oxcarbazepine, and valproic acid in your bloodstream. If the dose of these medications is not adjusted when these birth control treatments are started, seizure control can worsen. If you are taking lamotrigine, oxcarbazepine, or valproic acid and planning to start birth control, reach out to your doctors to discuss.

Consult With Your Doctors

We understand how important it is for you to find the birth control method that is right for you. The good news is that there are several birth control options that are safe and effective for people with epilepsy. Work with your doctors to identify the right option for you.

Of note, the efficacy of the "Morning after pill" (Plan B One Step®, Ella®) may be affected by strongly-interacting ASMs, so check with your doctor if you might need to double the usual dose.

Birth Control Method by Effectiveness	Potential of ASM Affecting Birth Control
Most Effective Birth Control (Less than 1 pregnancy per 100 persons in a year)	
Etonogestrel Implant (Nexplanon®)	Some ASMs may make Etonogestrel Implants less effective
Tubal Ligation	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Vasectomy	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Progestin IUDs (Mirena®, Skyla®, Kyleena®, Liletta®)	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Copper IUDs (Paragard®, Miudella®)	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Less Effective Birth Control (6 to 12 pregnancies per 100 persons in a year)	
Depo-Provera® Injection	Strongly-interacting ASMs may require that your Depo-Provera® Injections be given sooner than the usual 12 weeks
Pill	Mildly- and strongly-interacting ASMs may make the Pill less effective
Vaginal Ring	Mildly- and strongly-interacting ASMs may make the Vaginal Ring less effective
Patch	Mildly- and strongly-interacting ASMs may make the Patch less effective
Least Effective Birth Control (More than 10 pregnancies per 100 persons in a year)	
Male Condom*	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Diaphragm	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Withdrawal	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Female Condom*	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Spermicide	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Cervical Cap	Birth control not affected by ASMs
Fertility Awareness Methods	

**Condom use isn't affected by ASMs. However, when used alone, condoms are only 85% effective in preventing pregnancy with typical use. They are the only way to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI) and are recommended for all sexually active people at risk for STIs.*



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