

Antiepileptic medications

Females who are on antiepileptic medications whether for epilepsy, mental health conditions, pain management or migraines and become pregnant have a higher risk of having a baby with Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome.

Antiepileptic medications available in New Zealand are:

- carbamazepine - Tegretol®
- clobazam - Frisium®
- clonazepam - Paxam®, Rivotril®
- diazepam – Arrow-Diazepam®, Stesolid®
- ethosuximide - Zarontin®
- gabapentin - Neurontin®, Nupentin®, Arrow-Gabapentin®, Ranbaxy-Gabapentin®
- lacosamide - Vimpat®
- lamotrigine - Logem®, Mogine®, Lamictal®, Arrow-Lamotrigine®, Motrig®
- levetiracetam - Keppra®, Everet®, Levetiracetam PSM®
- lorazepam - Activan®
- oxcarbazepine - Trileptal®
- phenobarbital – Phenobarbitone PSM®
- phenytoin - Dilantin®
- pregabalin - Lyrica®, Mylan Pregabalin®, APO-Pregabalin®
- primidone – APO-Primidone®
- sodium valproate - Epilim®
- topiramate - Topamax®, Arrow-Topriamate®, Topriamate Actavis®
- vigabatrin - Sabril®

Key messages:

- ✓ **DO NOT STOP TAKING YOUR MEDICATION OR MAKE CHANGES TO YOUR MEDICATION UNLESS YOU HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL. This is very risky for both you and your unborn baby.**
- ✓ Antiepileptic medications are used to treat epilepsy, mental health conditions, pain and migraines.
- ✓ Pre-pregnancy counselling is essential.
- ✓ Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome is a preventable condition caused by taking an antiepileptic medication during pregnancy.
- ✓ Speak to your doctor if you are thinking about having a baby and do **not** stop using contraception until you have done so.
- ✓ Tell your doctor at once if you think you may be pregnant or know you are pregnant.
- ✓ Not all babies exposed to an antiepileptic medication in pregnancy will be affected.

Antiepileptic Medications in Pregnancy



About FACS NZ

The services that we can provide include information on our website, support and education, whether it be on an individualised basis, or to a larger group or community, awareness, and changing the future to bring about less occurrence of these syndromes.

This is not an exhaustive list and brand names may change – check with your medical professional.

FACS New Zealand

Website: www.facsnz.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/facsnz

Email: denise@facsnz.com

Phone: 021 189 4483

Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome

Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome (FACS) can occur when the antiepileptic medication has affected an unborn baby during pregnancy. The baby can have a combination of dysmorphic (facial) features, physical malformations and/or neurodevelopmental or cognitive impairments. Every person who has been affected presents differently, which means the symptoms or characteristics will differ.

Issues involved with taking an antiepileptic medication during pregnancy

- **Do not stop taking your medication**, or reduce the dose unless you have been advised by a medical professional, as doing so will increase the risk of severe seizures (for people with epilepsy), which poses a serious risk for both you and the unborn baby
- The risks are higher with some antiepileptic medications than others so speak to your medical professional about this
- Higher doses of an antiepileptic medication increases the risk to a baby in the womb
- When a combination of antiepileptic medications are used the risk increases
- Having a child already diagnosed with Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome increases the risk if the mum is still on the same medication and dose

How could your child be affected

(Not all babies exposed to an antiepileptic medication during pregnancy will be affected)

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Dysmorphic facial features

Cleft lip and/or palate

Developmental delay

Low muscle tone

Attention and memory problems



Speech and language problems

Spina bifida

Malformation of organs and limbs

Lower IQ

Gross and fine motor control difficulties

Please contact Foetal Anti-Convulsant Syndrome New Zealand for more information.