

Navigating epilepsy article for January

For this month, we will be focusing on specific issues that women with epilepsy can face. There are no differences between men and women if one were to look at the risk for recurrent seizures or the likelihood for relief from seizures with medication. However, there are differences as far as seizures are concerned between men and women, and this is because of sex hormones namely estrogen and progesterone. These hormones can have an effect on seizure frequency and on efficacy of anti-epileptic medication as well.

Some issues specific to women with epilepsy are -

Fertility – Women with epilepsy have fewer children, but it is not known why this is the case. It could be because women with epilepsy choose to have fewer children (because they fear having a child with birth defects). Another reason could be that seizures and/ or medications used to limit seizures have an adverse effect on fertility.

Menstrual disorders - as many as 1 in 3 women with epilepsy can have menstrual cycle disorders e.g. menstrual cycles can be anovulatory (ovaries do not release an egg).

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) – is characterized by multiple cysts in the ovaries and is also more common in women with epilepsy. Other symptoms of PCOS are excessive male hormones, excessive facial hair and acne.

For information on other aspects that are specific to women with epilepsy, check out Dr. Olga Laban's presentation at-

http://epilepsygroup.com/events_lectures6-67/epilepsy-lectures.htm

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