

How will my seizure medication affect my hormonal birth control?

There are complex interactions between the hormones (estrogen and progesterone) contained in birth control pills or devices, and some of the medications used to control seizures. Some of these medications increase the breakdown of contraceptive hormones in the body, making them less effective in preventing pregnancy. The seizure medications that have this effect are often called “liver enzyme-inducing” drugs because the liver is the organ that breaks down these hormones. They are carbamazepine (Tegretol, Carbatrol), oxcarbazepine (Trileptal), phenytoin (Dilantin), phenobarbital (Luminal), primidone (Mysoline), and topiramate (Topamax). Valproate (Depakote) and felbamate (Felbatol) do not increase breakdown of hormones, and may even increase hormonal levels, which may require an adjustment in the dose of your birth control. Gabapentin (Neurontin), lamotrigine (Lamictal), levetiracetam (Keppra), and tiagabine (Gabitril) have no effect on this system and do not interfere with the effectiveness of hormonal birth control.

Pathway Clinic/Wisconsin Eating Disorder Specialists