NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

NICE indicator guidance

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# Indicator NM03

The percentage of women under the age of 55 years who are taking antiepileptic drugs who have a record of information and counselling about contraception, conception and pregnancy in the preceding 12 months.

# Indicator type

General practice indicator suitable for use in the Quality and Outcomes Framework.

# Rationale

Antiepileptic drugs taken during pregnancy are associated with an increased risk of major congenital malformations (MCMs). Women in the general population have a 1–2% chance of having a baby with an MCM. Women with epilepsy taking 1 anti-epileptic drug (AED) have a chance of having a baby with an MCM of slightly over 3.5%, while for women taking 2 or more anti-epileptic drugs the average chance increases to 6%[[1]](#footnote-1). The risk of MCMs occurring can relate to having epilepsy and to taking AEDs while pregnant. Only 46% of women with epilepsy who have had children had been told that their medication might affect their unborn child[[2]](#footnote-2).

Valproate must not be used in pregnancy, and it must not be used in girls and women of childbearing potential (including young girls who are likely to need treatment into their childbearing years) unless other options are unsuitable and a pregnancy prevention programme in place, in line with the [MHRA safety advice on valproate](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/valproate-use-by-women-and-girls). This is because of the risk of malformations and developmental abnormalities in the baby.

The MHRA has published [temporary advice on the valproate pregnancy prevention programme during the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/valproate-pregnancy-prevention-programme-temporary-advice-for-management-during-coronavirus-covid-19).

# Source guidance

[Epilepsies: diagnosis and management](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg137) (2012, updated 2019) NICE guideline 137, recommendations 1.15.1.1 and 1.15.1.2.

# Specification

Numerator: The number of women in the denominator who have a record of information and counselling about contraception, conception and pregnancy in the preceding 12 months.

Denominator: The number of women under the age of 55 years who are taking antiepileptic drugs.

Calculation: (Numerator/denominator)\*100

Exclusions: Women who have been sterilised or undergone partial or complete removal of the uterus.

Minimum population: The indicator would be appropriate to assess performance at individual general practice level.

# Further information

This is NICE indicator guidance, which is part of the [NICE menu of indicators](https://www.nice.org.uk/Standards-and-Indicators/index). This document does not represent formal NICE guidance.

1. Morrow J, Russell A, Guthrie E et al. (2006) Malformation risks of antiepileptic drugs in pregnancy: a prospective study from the UK Epilepsy and Pregnancy Register. Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry 77: 193–8 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Crawford P, Hudson S (2003) Understanding the information needs of women with epilepsy at different lifestages: results of the 'Ideal World' survey. Seizure 12: 502–7 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)