

Ep. 86: Folic Acid Facts & Fiction: What Every Parent Should Know - with Dr. Elisabeth Marnik (@ScienceWhizLiz)

In this special Folic Acid Awareness Week episode of *The MotherToBaby Podcast*, host and genetic counselor Chris Stallman sits down with Dr. Elisabeth Marnik, PhD—a biomedical scientist, mom, and science communicator better known as [@ScienceWhizLiz on Instagram](#). Together, they unpack the science behind folic acid, its critical role in early pregnancy, and why it's one of the most important (yet misunderstood) nutrients for people of childbearing age.

From real talk on neural tube defect prevention to busting social media myths like “folic acid causes tongue ties” or “MTHFR mutations mean folic acid isn't safe,” this episode is packed with science-backed insights and practical guidance for both healthcare providers and future parents alike.

□ Key Topics Covered:

- What folic acid is and why it matters for pregnancy
- The difference between folic acid and folate
- When folic acid is most critical (hint: before you know you're pregnant!)
- Myths and misinformation about folic acid—especially on social media
- What the research *really* says about MTHFR gene mutations
- How to support patients with dietary restrictions or supplement concerns
- Why more folic acid is *not* always better

□ Guest Bio:

Dr. Elisabeth Marnik is a biomedical scientist with a PhD from Tufts University and The Jackson Laboratory, where she studied immune system function, autoimmune disease, and vaccine response. She's also a passionate science communicator who makes complex topics clear and relatable for thousands of followers as [@ScienceWhizLiz](#) on

Instagram.

▣ **Resources Mentioned:**

- Learn more about folic acid: **MotherToBaby Folic Acid Fact Sheet**
- Contact a MotherToBaby specialist (free & confidential):
 - Call: 866-626-6847
 - Text: 855-999-3525
 - Chat: **MotherToBaby.org**
- Follow Dr. Marnik: **@ScienceWhizLiz** on Instagram

▣ **Have a Question or Topic Idea?**

We'd love to hear from you! Email us at **contactus@mothertobaby.org**.

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Help us keep this podcast free and accessible. Join our monthly giving community, **Encircle**, to support parents and families with trusted pregnancy and breastfeeding information. Learn more at **MotherToBaby.org/Donate**

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).

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Amy Nelson, MBA, BSN, RN, the Clinic Director at Pipestone Family Clinic in Pipestone, MN, joins host Chris Stallman, CGC, to talk about the importance of folic acid and a special program in Minnesota that's changing the habits of people of childbearing age through folic acid intervention. The Interventions to Minimize Preterm and Low Birth Weight Infants through Continuous Improvement Techniques (IMPLICIT) Network is a quality improvement collaborative focused on improving the health of women and their birth outcomes. This is a special episode in collaboration with Folic Acid Awareness Week. To learn more about folic acid, please see the [MotherToBaby Folic Acid Fact Sheet](#) or speak with an expert at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).

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The MotherToBaby Podcast welcomes CDC scientist CAPT Jennifer Williams to talk folic acid and its role in preventing birth defects of the brain and spine.

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Laura Morehouse, MPH, CHES, Community Outreach Coordinator from the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center joins host Chris Stallman, CGC, to talk about the recent controversy surrounding melatonin overdoses.

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If I'm pregnant, can I use essential oils? Is it ok to take herbal products, like flaxseed and other herbal supplements during breastfeeding? MotherToBaby Podcast host Chris Stallman, a certified genetic counselor and mother of three, takes questions from other moms from around the country about the known safety of using essential oils and herbal products during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Alfred Romeo, RN, PhD from MotherToBaby's Utah affiliate is her guest expert helping to provide evidence-based answers.

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