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.

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Host Chris Stallman, CGC, welcomes back Maternal-Fetal Medicine Specialist and social media health educator, Dr. Shannon Clark of @babiesafter35. Dr. Clark joins the podcast for a special Folic Acid Awareness Week episode and debunks potentially dangerous folic acid myths being spread on social media. Hear the evidence-based facts in this important episode!

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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.

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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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Chris Stallman, a certified genetic counselor, teratogen information specialist and mother of three (soon four), talks with two experts and new moms from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the five tips for preventing birth defects, which includes taking enough folic acid every day, booking a visit with your healthcare provider before

stopping or starting any medicine, and getting up to date with all vaccines, including the flu shot. The tips are part of the theme for January's National Birth Defects Prevention Month.

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