Ep. 89 – Epilepsy, Pregnancy, and Advocacy: Dr. Kristi McIntosh’s Story of Science and Strength

What happens when epilepsy meets pregnancy planning? In this episode of The MotherToBaby Podcast, host Chris Stallman, MS, CGC—a genetic counselor, mom of four, and teratogen information specialist—talks with Dr. Kristi McIntosh from the University of British Columbia.

Dr. McIntosh shares her powerful personal and professional journey—from being diagnosed with epilepsy at age ten to navigating fertility challenges, medication changes, and high-risk pregnancies. As both a scientist and a mom, she offers unique insights into:

 Managing anti-epileptic drugs during pregnancy

 What EEGs reveal about brain activity and seizure patterns

 Balancing medication safety with seizure control

 The realities of breastfeeding while on seizure medication

 Why early conversations and self-advocacy are key

Her story underscores the importance of education, planning, and open communication between patients and providers.

 Tune in to hear how informed decisions and early preparation can make all the difference for people with epilepsy who are considering pregnancy.

Listen on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Audible and anywhere you listen to podcasts!

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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Managing ADHD during pregnancy can feel overwhelming—especially when juggling appointments, medications, mood changes, and everyday life. In this episode of The MotherToBaby Podcast, genetic counselor and teratogen information specialist Chris Stallman, CGC sits down with returning guest Dr. Christy Pratt, a pharmacist at Kaiser Permanente Colorado, for an in-depth, practical conversation about ADHD in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Together, they discuss:

- How ADHD symptoms can shift during pregnancy
- What to consider when deciding whether to continue stimulant or non-stimulant medications
- How co-occurring conditions like anxiety or depression affect treatment decisions
- Why risk–benefit conversations are essential—and individualized
- Non-medication strategies and organization tools that actually help
- How healthcare providers can better support pregnant patients with ADHD
- What Dr. Pratt wishes more people understood about ADHD as a real, physiological condition
- Dr. Pratt also shares insights from her innovative program at Kaiser Permanente, where newly pregnant patients

receive personalized risk–benefit consultations about their medications.

- Whether you're pregnant, planning a pregnancy, supporting someone with ADHD, or working in maternal-child health, this episode offers validation, clarity, and evidence-based guidance—always centered on achieving the best outcomes for both parent and baby.

Key takeaway: "We need a healthy mama to grow a healthy baby." —Dr. Christy Pratt

For more evidence-based information about exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding, visit MotherToBaby.org.

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Concerned about medication use during pregnancy? You're not alone.
In this episode of The MotherToBaby Podcast, host Chris Stallman, MS, CGC (genetic counselor, mom of four, teratogen information specialist) sits down with Dr. Judy C. Morrow of Harvard Medical School to break down how FDA REMS (Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy) programs help reduce the risk of birth defects and protect pregnant patients.

Together, they discuss:
✔ What REMS programs are and why they exist
✔ How REMS programs support safe medication use
✔ The role of manufacturers, prescribers, and pharmacists
✔ Common medications with REMS programs (including isotretinoin/Accutane)
✔ Pregnancy testing requirements & pharmacy restrictions
✔ Why some drugs don't have REMS (even if risks exist)
✔ What patients should ask if they're prescribed a REMS-covered medication

Dr. Morrow shares how researchers use real-world data to identify medication-related adverse events in pregnancy, how REMS programs try to prevent exposed pregnancies, and why communication between patients, providers, and pharmacists is essential.

If you're pregnant, planning a pregnancy, breastfeeding, or support patients in these settings, this episode offers clear, practical insights to help guide informed decision-making.

 Key topics: pregnancy, REMS, FDA, teratogens, isotretinoin, Accutane, birth defects, pharmacy programs, medication safety, pregnancy data, registries

 Listen now to learn how REMS programs help protect pregnant women and their babies.

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Ep. 89 – Epilepsy, Pregnancy, and Advocacy: Dr. Kristi McIntosh's Story of Science and Strength

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?
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In this episode of the ***MotherToBaby Podcast***, host and genetic counselor Chris Stallman welcomes Dr. Emily Caffrey, a certified health physicist at the Health Physics Society and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Together, they dive into one of the most frequently asked topics: how radiation exposure may impact breastfeeding.

Dr. Caffrey explains the difference between ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, details how imaging procedures like X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs interact with the body, and addresses concerns around contrast agents and radioactive tracers. The episode also covers what breastfeeding women working around radiation should know, including practical safety tips and case-by-case considerations.

Key Takeaways:

- Diagnostic imaging procedures do not make breast milk radioactive or require stopping breastfeeding
- Some radioactive tracers or therapeutic treatments may require temporary or permanent changes to breastfeeding plans, depending on the specific agent and dose
- Always inform your healthcare provider that you're breastfeeding and ask questions about any upcoming procedures
- Expert help is available—don't rely on internet searches alone

Resources mentioned in this episode:

- MotherToBaby.org
- Health Physics Society
- American College of Radiology Guidelines
- Call 866-626-6847 or text 855-999-3525 to speak with a MotherToBaby specialist

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