

NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION NETWORK

National Folic Acid Awareness Week

January 7 – 13, 2018

Sample Article

January 7 – 13 is National Folic Acid Awareness Week, but folic acid should be part of a healthy lifestyle every day.

What Is Folic Acid And Why Do You Need It?

- Folic acid is a B vitamin that everyone needs to stay in good health. Folic acid helps build DNA and your body uses it for cell growth and reproduction.
- In 1998, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration started fortifying cereal grain products with folic acid in order to reduce the risk for neural tube defects (NTDs). NTDs are serious birth defects of the brain and spine. While this was a great step to prevent birth defects, it is often not enough to protect all pregnancies.
- Folic acid is water soluble, so it passes through your body very quickly. Taking folic acid every day ensures that you always have it in your system when your body needs it.
- It is particularly important for women of reproductive age to get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid daily. It has been shown to reduce the risk of having a baby born with an NTD by up to 70%. NTDs form very early in pregnancy so it's important for women to take folic acid *before* they even get pregnant. About half of pregnancies in the United States are unplanned. This is why it's important to take folic acid every day, even if you're not planning to get pregnant.



How Can I Get Folic Acid?

Think you are getting all of the vitamins you need from your diet alone? Think again! It is hard to get certain vitamins from food alone.

- Many women believe they do not need to take multivitamins because they eat healthy foods. Folate, a different form of the same B vitamin, is found in foods such as leafy green vegetables, beans, liver and some fruit, but 50 to 90% of food folate is destroyed in cooking.
- Folic acid is the synthetic form of the naturally occurring folate found in foods. Folic acid is easier for your body to absorb than folate. Folic acid is found in multivitamins and fortified foods like breakfast cereal, pasta, and bread.



- Multivitamins help fill in those nutrition gaps in your diet, especially when it comes to getting enough folic acid.

Who needs folic acid?

All women need folic acid every day. Getting enough folic acid, before and during early pregnancy, is an important way to reduce the risk of NTDs. These birth defects occur in the first weeks of pregnancy, often before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Some women may be at higher risk. Latinas have higher rates of NTD-affected births and they consume less folic acid compared to non-Hispanic white women.

Join Us To Raise Awareness About Folic Acid!

National Folic Acid Awareness Week is January 7-13, 2018.

The [**organization**] works to educate consumers and health care providers about the benefits and sources of folic acid. [**Insert information about the work of the organization**]. The [**organization**] recommends getting 400 mcg of folic acid daily by taking a multivitamin with folic acid and eating fortified foods. [**Include quote from a contact person/spokesperson from the organization**].

People who are interested in joining the effort should tell their friends and families about folic acid. To join folic acid awareness efforts locally, contact [**name**] at [**phone**] or by e-mail at [**email**]. For more information about the [**organization**] or folic acid visit [**link**] or call [**phone number**]. Remember to make daily folic acid part of your healthy lifestyle!