

# FOLIC ACID & FOLATE



# Folic acid and Folate

When you are having your favorite cereal, have you ever asked yourself what the words “Folate or Folic acid ” on the nutritional label really mean?



SAN YSIDRO HEALTH CENTER

Folate is a water-soluble B vitamin (B9) that occurs naturally in food, and folic acid is the synthetic form of folate that is found in vitamin supplements and added to fortified foods.

Folic acid is necessary for the red cell production process, cellular multiplication and DNA formation which is why it is crucial for cellular development and growth as well as the formation of tissue and organs for a fetus in the early stages of pregnancy and for the growth of the fetus and placenta later on. Research has shown that women who take folic acid prior to conception and during the first few months of their pregnancy reduce the risk of severe Neural Tube Defects (NTD's) in the baby by 70%. These defects could include an incomplete development of the brain and/or spinal cord. Folic acid also can help prevent premature babies with a low birth weight, miscarriage and birth defects such as cleft palate and palatine fissure.

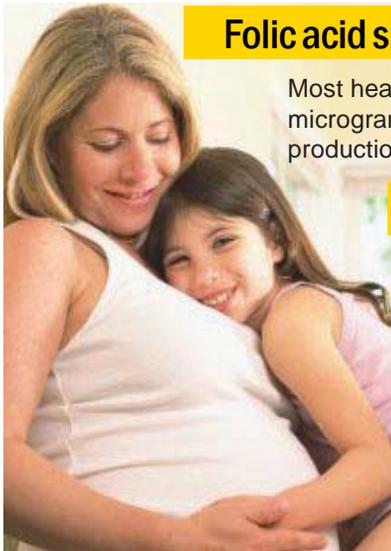
The more common Neural Tube Defects (NTD's) are spina bifida (incomplete closure of the embryonic neural tube results in an incompletely formed spinal cord), anencephaly (insufficient brain development) and encephalocele (sac-like protrusions of the brain and the membranes that cover it through openings in the skull). All these defects occur during the first 28 days of pregnancy; generally before a woman knows she is pregnant.

March of Dimes recommends women take, as part of a healthy diet, 400 mg of folic acid each day, even if they do not plan on becoming pregnant, so that they have the necessary amount of folic acid for conception.



In 1996, the FDA published regulations requiring the addition of folic acid to enriched breads, cereals, flours, and other grain products. This was specifically targeted to reduce the risk of neural tube defects (NTDs) in newborns. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2004 that since the addition of folic acid to grain-based foods, the rate of neural tube defects has dropped by 25% in the United States.

## Folic acid should be increased during the pregnancy and lactation



Most health care providers recommend a prenatal vitamins, most of which contain 800 to 1,000 micrograms of folic acid, taken during early pregnancy and after having the baby to aid in milk production during lactation.

## Folic acid deficiency

In addition to birth defects, a deficiency of folic acid can cause a delayed development of the fetus and anemia. Anemia is frequently detected in pregnant women, the elderly, people with dietary deficiency, and alcoholics. Medical conditions and medications can increase the risk of folic acid deficiency. Symptoms of anemia are fatigue, weakness, apathy, headaches, irregular heartbeats, diarrhea, lack of appetite, weight loss, irritability and forgetfulness. High deficiency may lead to paralysis and possible death. It is important to have a physician evaluate these symptoms so that appropriate medical care can be given.

## What foods provide folate?

Folate is in many healthful foods. Liver, dark green leafy vegetables, fruit, and dried beans and peas are all natural sources of folate. Actually anyone who follows the USDA Food Pyramid Guide, which includes three to five servings of vegetables, two to four servings of fruit, and six to 11 servings of enriched breads, cereals, and pastas, can usually consume the daily recommended amount of 400-500 micrograms of folate

WIC San Ysidro Health Center joins March of Dimes in the National Birth Defects Prevention Month and the National Folic Acid Awareness Week 2008 by promoting the education on the importance of folic acid before and during early pregnancy.

## Folic Acid is good for all!

Folate, known as folic acid, acts as a natural antidepressant and tranquilizer, helping prevent and/or improve serious diseases such as gastritis, heart disease, chronic fatigue, cancer, dementia, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's. It also aids in mental agility.

The folic acid is good for men and women of any age because it fulfills an important role in the production of red blood cells and serotonin, which helps keep the body strong and healthy against serious illness.

Folic acid should be taken prior to pregnancy, when a woman is anticipating to becoming pregnant. It will greatly benefit the fetus as it develops since Folic acid helps from the moment of conception and strengthens the placenta and the fetus as it develops into a healthy baby.

In the United States about 2,500 children are born each year with neural tube defects. This is something that can be prevented by taking folic acid, which is a complex B vitamin naturally found in green-leaf vegetables such as coleslaw, spinach, etc.; it also can be found in orange juice and enriched grains. People with a folic acid deficiency develop a specific type of anemia. The intake of this vitamin, in its synthetic form, can help make up for the lack of folic acid in these individuals.

**WIC San Ysidro Health Center and Salud+Health Info have joined March of Dimes campaign to promote the National Birth Defects Prevention Month to promote education and help to prevent birth defects.**



## El ácido fólico es bueno para todos

El Folato conocido como el ácido fólico natural, actúa como un antidepresivo y calmante natural, ayudando a prevenir, y/o mejorar varias enfermedades graves como son: gastritis, enfermedades cardíacas, fatiga crónica, cáncer, demencia, parkinson, alzheimer's y ayuda en la agilidad mental.

### Acido Fólico

El ácido fólico es bueno para hombres y mujeres de cualquier edad, porque cumple un papel importante en la producción de glóbulos rojos y de la serotonina, lo que ayuda a mantener un organismo saludable y resistente a varias enfermedades graves.

El ácido fólico debe de tomarse antes del embarazo, cuando la mujer está en posibilidad de embarzarse que es cuando los beneficios son mayores porque el ácido fólico ayuda desde la concepción y fortalecimiento de la placenta, ayudando al feto a desarrollarse en un bebé saludable.

En Estados Unidos cerca de 2.500 niños nacen cada año con defectos del tubo neural. Esto es algo que se puede evitar tomando ácido fólico, que es una vitamina del complejo B y que se encuentra de forma natural en los vegetales de hojas verdes, como la col, las espinacas, etc.; además de en el jugo de naranja y los granos enriquecidos. Las personas con deficiencias de ácido fólico desarrollan un tipo específico de anemia. La ingestión de esta vitamina, en su forma sintética, puede ayudar a suplir las carencias de ácido fólico en estas personas.

**WIC San Ysidro Health Center y Salud+Health info , se unen a la Campaña de Nacional de March of Dimes, para promover la educación que ayude a la prevención de los defectos de nacimiento.**

**SALUD+HEALTH**  
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For more information about the March of Dimes National Birth Defects Prevention Campaign please visit: [www.marchofdimes.org](http://www.marchofdimes.org) y para español visite por favor [www.nacersano.com](http://www.nacersano.com)

Para más información de la campaña nacional de March of Dimes para la "Prevención de los Defectos de Nacimiento" visite por favor [www.marchofdimes.org](http://www.marchofdimes.org) en inglés, y en español [www.nacersano.org](http://www.nacersano.org)