

# Folic Acid Awareness

## What is Folic Acid?

Folic acid is a B vitamin. The body uses it to make new cells.

## Why do women need Folic Acid?

Everyone needs folic acid to be healthy, but it is especially important for those of childbearing age.

- **Before and during pregnancy.** Folic acid protects the developing child against serious birth defects called neural tube defects. These birth defects happen in the first few weeks of pregnancy, often before a woman knows she is pregnant. Folic acid might also help prevent other types of birth defects and early pregnancy loss (miscarriage). Since about half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned<sup>1</sup>, experts recommend all women get enough folic acid even if you are not trying to get pregnant.
- **To keep the blood healthy by helping red blood cells form and grow.** Not getting enough folic acid can lead to a type of anemia called folate-deficiency anemia. Folate-deficiency anemia is more common in women of childbearing age than in men.



## How much Folic Acid should women take?

All women of reproductive age should get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid each day.

## How do I get Folic Acid?

You can get folic acid in two ways:

1. **Through the foods you eat.** Folate is found naturally in some foods, including spinach, nuts, and beans. Folic acid is found in fortified foods (called "enriched foods"), such as breads, pastas, and cereals. Look for the term "enriched" on the ingredients list to find out whether the food has added folic acid.
2. **As a vitamin.** Most multivitamins sold in the United States contain 400 micrograms, or 100% of the daily value, of folic acid. Check the label to make sure.

## Resources:

Folic Acid Recommendations | CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/recommendations.html>

Folic Acid | Office on Women's Health

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/folic-acid>

