



## The Facts About Folic Acid

Folic acid is a B-vitamin that is necessary for proper cell growth. If taken before and during early pregnancy from a multi-vitamin or fortified foods, folic acid can prevent from 50% up to 70% of some forms of serious birth defects of the brain and spine.

### When to start taking folic acid

For folic acid to help prevent major birth defects, a woman needs to start taking it at least one month before she becomes pregnant and while she is pregnant. However, every woman needs folic acid every day, whether she's planning to get pregnant or not, for the healthy new cells the body makes daily. Think about the skin, hair, and nails. These – and other parts of the body – make new cells each day.

### How a woman can get enough folic acid

There are two easy ways to be sure to get enough folic acid each day:

**1.** Take a vitamin that has folic acid in it every day. Most multivitamins sold in the United States have the amount of folic acid women need each day. Women can also choose to take a small pill (supplement) that has only folic acid in it each day.

Multivitamins and folic acid pills can be found at most local pharmacy, grocery, or discount stores. Check the label to be sure it contains 100% of the daily value (DV) of folic acid, which is 400 micrograms (mcg).

**2.** Eat a bowl of breakfast cereal that has 100% of the daily value of folic acid every day. Not every cereal has this amount. Check the label on the side of the box, and look for one that has "100%" next to folic acid.

**If you would like more information, please contact  
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