

What About Folic Acid?



Folic acid is a type of B vitamin that's key for cell growth and metabolism. Studies show that many people in the U.S. don't get enough folic acid.

Folate is the natural substance in whole foods. Folic acid is the synthetic version in supplements and fortified products so don't be confused by the different terms. They have the same effects.

Folic Acid Uses

Folic acid supplements are standard for pregnant women and women who plan to become pregnant. Folic acid can lower the risk of preeclampsia and early labor. Folic acid also reduces the risk for devastating birth defects of a baby's brain and spine -- spina bifida and anencephaly -- by 50% to 70%. Many doctors recommend that any woman of childbearing age take either a multivitamin or folic acid supplements. Folic acid can protect against birth defects that may occur before a woman knows she is pregnant.

Folic acid is used to treat deficiencies, which can cause certain types of anemia and other problems. Folate deficiencies are more common in people who have digestive problems, kidney or liver disease, or who abuse alcohol. When used to treat deficiencies, folic acid should be used along with vitamin B12. In addition to treating anemia, they work together to promote neurological health.

Folic Acid Food Sources

Good sources of folic acid (folate) are:

- Leafy green vegetables, like spinach, broccoli, and lettuce
- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Fruits like lemons, bananas, and melons
- Fortified and enriched products, like some breads, juices, and cereals

Folic Acid Supplement Information

Folic acid often comes in tablets or capsules. Folic acid is standard in multivitamins.

Folic acid is best absorbed if you're also getting sufficient amounts of vitamin C and other B vitamins.

**If you would like more information, please contact
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