

SB&H FOLIC ACID UPDATE – 2008

WOMEN WITH NO KNOWN RISKS

Women with no personal health risks, planned pregnancy, and good compliance require a good diet of folate-rich foods daily supplementation with a **multivitamin with folic acid (0.4-1.0 mg)** for at least two to three months before conception and throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period (4-6 weeks and as long as breastfeeding continues).

WOMEN WITH HEALTH RISKS

Women with compromised health or particular health conditions such as insulin dependent diabetes, obesity, or those with a previous child in the family with a neural tube defect require increased dietary intake of folate-rich foods and daily supplementation, with **multivitamins with 5 mg folic acid**, beginning at least three months before conception and continuing until 10 to 12 weeks post conception. From 12 weeks post-conception and continuing throughout pregnancy and for four to six weeks after the baby is born (or as long as breastfeeding continues), supplementation should consist of a multivitamin with folic acid (0.4-1.0 mg).

WOMEN WITH LIFESTYLE RISKS

Extra efforts need to be made to counsel more vulnerable women (e.g. those with a variable diet, no consistent birth control, and possible substance use) about the prevention of birth defects and health problems via folic acid and multivitamin supplementation. It is recommended that they also receive a higher dose of **folic acid (5 mg) with multivitamin**.

ALL WOMEN

All women who plan to have children are advised to start their folic acid supplementation as early as three months before they conceive.

Women taking a multivitamin containing folic acid should not take more than one daily dose of multivitamin supplement, as indicated on the product label.

Women of childbearing age are advised to maintain a healthy diet, as recommended in Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide (Health Canada), in addition to folic acid and multi-vitamin supplementation. Foods containing excellent to good sources of folic acid are fortified grains, spinach, lentils, chickpeas, asparagus, broccoli, peas, Brussels sprouts, corn, and oranges. (NB: Despite this dietary advice, it is unlikely that diet alone can provide the folic acid levels recommended for those planning to have children.)

Taken from the Joint Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada-Motherisk Clinical Practice Guidelines 2007. For further information call SB&H at 1-800-387-1575 or 416-214-1056 go to **www.folicacid.ca**

AVAILABILITY OF 5 MG DOSE FOLIC ACID – every day:

Take 1 multivitamin containing 5 mg of folic acid available by prescription.

-or-

Take 1 multivitamin containing 1 mg of folic acid and take four 1 mg folic acid tablets. These are readily available at a pharmacy after you speak to your doctor.

Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario

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