

Folic Acid

may prevent neural tube defects



Folic acid is essential to healthy living for all women

Many women understand the importance of making healthy living part of their daily routine. They eat well, exercise and get enough sleep.

Before you get pregnant...

Folic acid should be taken even before conception as it can reduce the risk of neural tube defects (NTDs). Women who are planning to get pregnant should be taking folic acid supplements at least three months prior to getting pregnant. And, because half of all pregnancies are unplanned, taking folic acid if you are sexually active, is just smart.

Why take folic acid?

Taking folic acid is important to help reduce the risk of serious birth defects. It can reduce the risk of neural tube defects (NTDs) such as spina bifida and anencephaly by as much as 70%. NTDs happen in the first four weeks after conception – this is often before most women know that they are even pregnant.

How much is enough?

Health care professionals recommend taking a multivitamin containing at least 0.4 mg of folic acid daily for at least 3 months prior to conception and during your first trimester.

How do you get enough folic acid?

You can get the recommended amount of folic acid by taking a multivitamin containing at least 0.4 mg of folic acid every day and eating a healthy diet containing foods high in folate.



Are you at risk?

Any woman who can become pregnant risks having a baby with an NTD. The risk may increase if you:

- had a previous pregnancy affected by an NTD
- have a personal or family history of NTDs (or your partner has such a history)
- have insulin-dependent diabetes
- use certain anti-seizure medications
- are clinically obese
- abuse alcohol or
- are of Celtic, Northern Chinese, Cree or Sikh.

If one or more of these factors apply to you, you may require a higher amount of folic acid each day to reduce the risk of NTDs.

Consult your health care provider whether or not you are planning to get pregnant.

Now you know.
Protect your baby.
Learn more at [https://
www.hydrocephalus.ca/spina-
bifida-info/folic-acid/](https://www.hydrocephalus.ca/spina-bifida-info/folic-acid/)

Sources of Folic Acid

Folic acid may be found in most over-the-counter multivitamins and prenatal vitamins.

Eat foods that are rich in folic acid (B vitamin) as part of a healthy diet.

Try broccoli, spinach and orange juice as well as foods fortified with folic acid, such as enriched bread, cereal and pasta.

Excellent Sources (0.055 mg or more)

- chickpeas, lentils 3/4 cup (175 ml)
- asparagus (cooked) 1/2 cup (125 ml)
- spinach (cooked) 1/2 cup (125 ml)
- orange juice, frozen 1/2 cup (125 ml)
- enriched pasta 1/2 cup (125 ml)
- broccoli, beets and brussel sprouts (cooked) 1/2 cup (125 ml)

Good Sources (0.033 mg or more)

- eggs, raw or cooked in shell 2 large
- orange 1 medium
- corn 1/2 cup (125 ml)



Know the facts

- folic acid, a B vitamin, is also known as folate when found in food
- folic acid is essential for the development of a baby's spine, brain and skull in the early weeks of pregnancy
- neural tube defects (NTDs) are complex, incurable neurological conditions
- about 1 in 1300 pregnancies is affected by an NTD in Canada.

Still have questions?

More information on folic acid, sources of folic acid in food, including a fun way to measure the folic acid in your daily food intake, is available at: mybrainwaves.ca/folic-acid/

About Hydrocephalus Canada

Our goal is to empower individuals impacted by hydrocephalus and spina bifida to experience the best life possible. We believe everyone affected:

- has the right to our attention, compassion and commitment
- has value and deserves to be treated with dignity
- requires and deserves access to safe, effective care
- benefits from, and offers benefit to, collaborative communities
- has the responsibility to be educated on the condition

Our current efforts are focused on:

- increasing awareness of hydrocephalus and spina bifida
- advocating for solutions to support prevention; early, accurate diagnosis; access to appropriate treatment; optimal outcomes; and, ultimately a cure
- developing education and support tools for patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals, policy makers and media
- establishing supportive communities that encourage inclusive, proactive conversations and activities, and
- funding meaningful, breakthrough research

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