Folic Acid: A “B” Vitamin for a Healthier YOU!

Alabama Department of Public Health’s Alabama Folic Acid Council and the University of South Alabama's Alabama Birth Defects Surveillance and Prevention Program
Course Outline

- What is folic acid?
- Why is folic acid important?
- What are Neural Tube Defects?
- How do you get enough folic acid?
- How much folic acid do you need?
What is Folic Acid

- A “B” Vitamin
- Synthetic form better absorbed
- **Everyone** needs folic acid!!
Why Is Folic Acid Important?

Health Benefits to Everyone

- Helps your body form red blood cells and DNA
- Promotes normal growth and development
- May play a role in prevention of certain cancers
- Reduces your risk for heart attack and stroke
- Can Prevent some Birth Defects
Birth Defects

- Can happen to any developing baby.
- 3,000 - 5,000 different birth defects.
- Birth defects: Leading cause of infant death.
- Folic acid can prevent neural tube defects.
Neural Tube Defects (NTDs)

- NTDs are defects of the brain or spine
- Approximately 4,000 pregnancies in the U.S. affected by NTDs each year
- Folic acid can help prevent up to 70% of NTDs if taken before becoming pregnant
Neural Tube Defects

Anencephaly	Spina Bifida	Encephalocele
All women who could possibly get pregnant should take 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.

Women who have already had a baby with a NTD and want to have another baby should take 4 milligrams of folic acid daily (ten times the regular dose) one month before becoming pregnant and the first three months of pregnancy.
Sources of: Folate

- Dark green, leafy vegetables
  - romaine lettuce
  - broccoli
  - spinach
- Avocados, corn & dried beans
- Peanuts, sunflower seeds
- Orange juice
- Beef liver, lean beef
- Egg yolk

Folic acid

- Enriched whole grains and fortified cereals
  - white or whole wheat breads
  - oatmeal and cereals
- Multivitamins
  - Super Fortified Cereals
Fortification of Grain Products with Folic Acid

“Super Fortified” Cereals
How much folic acid do you need?

Everyone needs 400 mcg daily by...

- Taking a vitamin supplement containing 400 mcg of folic acid, or
- Eating a fortified breakfast cereal with 100% of the RDA, or
- Adding enriched foods and foods high in folate into your diet
Resource list

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid
- March of Dimes
  www.marchofdimes.com
- Spina Bifida Association of America
  www.sbaa.org (Got a Minute?)
- Health Care Provider
- State or County Health Department