

Folic Acid

Prevent birth defects



Folic acid is a B vitamin that is essential to a healthy diet. Getting enough folic acid before and during pregnancy helps prevent birth defects of the brain and spine. Folic acid also gives you glowing skin, shiny hair, and stronger nails.

What to do

You need 400 micrograms of folic acid every day, especially if you're trying to get pregnant.

- Take a vitamin with folic acid. You can choose a multivitamin or a folic acid supplement.
- Eat breakfast cereal, rice, pasta, and bread with folic acid. Check the nutritional label to ensure it says 100% of the daily value of folic acid.
- Eat foods rich in folate, like dark leafy greens, asparagus, avocado, broccoli, and black-eyed peas.

What to know

Don't wait to start taking folic acid until you are pregnant.

Birth defects of the brain and spine, such as spina bifida and anencephaly, start in the first three to four weeks after conception. At this time, most people don't even know they are pregnant. So, make folic acid a part of your routine whether you are trying to get pregnant or not.

For more information

- **CDC Folic Acid:**
<http://www.cdc.gov/folicacid>
- **CDC Birth Defects Prevention:**
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/prevention.html>
- **CDC Preconception Health:**
<http://www.cdc.gov/preconception>



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