

Dear Future Me

Lifelong Benefits of Folic Acid



NBDPN
NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS
PREVENTION NETWORK



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- Folate and Folic Acid overview
 - Terminology
 - Neural tube defect risk reduction
 - Other impacts of folate and folic acid
- Panel Q&A
 - Promising approaches
 - Implementation challenges
 - Key takeaways

What do we mean by folate and folic acid?

- **Folate:** Generic term for vitamin B9 found in foods.
- **Folic acid:** Synthetic vitamin B9 found in fortified foods and supplements.
- **5-MTHF:** Synthetic vitamin B9 found in specialized supplements.

Fact: Folic acid still successfully raises blood folate levels and reduces the risk of neural tube defects in people with MTHFR gene variants¹.

- **Neural tube defects (NTDs):** Serious birth defects of the brain, spine, or spinal cord, such as spina bifida, anencephaly, and encephalocele.
- **Food fortification:** Adding essential vitamins and minerals to common foods during processing (in this case, vitamin B9).
- **400 micrograms (mcg):** Recommended daily dose of folic acid, especially for people who may become pregnant.
 - People who are at a higher risk of having a pregnancy affected by NTDs may be advised to take a higher dose.

Reducing the risk of NTDs

- Neural tube development happens early in pregnancy, often before someone knows they're pregnant.
- 42 - 45% of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended².
- It is difficult to get enough folate through food alone.
- Daily multivitamin use has declined among women of reproductive age in the United States³.

Fact: About 2,300 pregnancies in the U.S. are affected by NTDs each year⁴.

Other impacts of folate and folic acid

Fact: Consuming folate and folic acid from a combination of sources helps people get the recommended 400 mcg daily⁵.

- Cell growth⁶.
- Blood production and heart health⁷.
- Brain function⁸.
- DNA repair and potential reduced cancer risk⁹.

Panel Q&A

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