
Folate and You

Before, During, and After Pregnancy

What is Folate?

- § Folate is a B vitamin.
- § It is also called **folic acid** or **folacin**.
- § Folate helps a baby's spine and brain develop before it is born.



Who Needs Folate?

- § Everyone needs some folate.
- § Women who think they will ever have a baby need extra folate.
- § **Pregnant women**, especially in the first 3 months of pregnancy need folate.

Why is Folate Important?



- § Folate can help protect your unborn baby from birth defects of the brain or spine, such as spina bifida.
- § Baby's brain and spine form in the first weeks of pregnancy, so you need folate in your body before you get pregnant and in the first months of pregnancy.

How Much Folate Do You Need?

- Women need at least 400 micrograms (mcg) of folate every day.

Where Can You Get Folate?

- From folate-rich foods and multivitamins.

This will help you get enough folate:

- Eat plenty of whole grains and cereals.
- Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Avoid overcooking. Fresh is best.
- Take a multivitamin that contains 400 micrograms (mcg) folate or 0.4 milligrams (mg) folate.



Foods With Folate

Rich Sources

(more than 80 mcg per serving)

orange juice
breakfast cereals
beans (pinto, navy, kidney, lima)
lentils
garbanzo beans
spinach
strawberries
asparagus
mustard greens
sunflower seeds
Brewer's yeast

Good Sources

(40-80 mcg per serving)

green peas
split peas
romaine lettuce
broccoli
beets
cauliflower
peanuts
leaf lettuce
cantaloupe
artichoke
avocado
okra
papaya
raspberries
wheat germ