National Folic Acid Awareness Week, observed during the first full week of January every year, brings much-needed attention to this crucial vitamin that is especially important to women who are either pregnant or may become pregnant. Folic Acid Awareness Week has been recognized as a part of the CDC-backed National Birth Defects Prevention Month since January of 1997.¹

Folic acid is a B vitamin that every cell in the body needs for healthy growth and development. Taken before pregnancy and during early pregnancy, folic acid can help protect baby from developing neural tube defects (NTD) such as anencephaly and spina bifida. Some studies show that folic acid also may help prevent birth defects in a baby’s mouth such as a cleft lip and palate.²

Because nearly half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges all women of reproductive age to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid each day, in addition to consuming food with folate from a varied diet, to help prevent some major birth defects of the baby’s brain and spine.³ During pregnancy, a prenatal vitamin that has 600 micrograms of folic acid in it should be taken every day.²

Neural tube defects (NTDs) affect about 3,000 pregnancies each year in the United States. If all women take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day before getting pregnant and during early pregnancy, it may help prevent up to 7 in 10 (70 percent) NTDs.²

**Women at high risk for Neural Tube Defects:**
- Had a baby with a NTD in the past.
- They or their partner has a NTD.
- Their partner has a child with a NTD.²

Studies show that taking 4,000 mcg of folic acid before and during early pregnancy can help women at high risk reduce the risk of having another baby with a NTD by about 70 percent.²

**Folic acid can be found in:**
- Asparagus
- Broccoli
- Peanuts
- Lemons
- Melons
- Avocados
- Eggs
- Oranges
- Bananas
- Strawberries
- Beans
- Peas
- Dark green leafy vegetables like spinach and Romaine lettuce
- Cornmeal
- Flour
- Pasta
- Bread
- Breakfast cereal
- White rice
- Products made from a kind of flour called corn masa like tortillas, tortilla chips, taco shells, tamales and pupusas

¹ Department of Health and Environment
² National Folic Acid Awareness Week
³ Source: CDC
Data were gathered from the Kansas Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2017-2019. PRAMS is a survey where women who recently gave birth are interviewed about their health and experiences before, during, and shortly after pregnancy.

More than half (52.1%) of women with a recent live birth reported not taking a multivitamin, prenatal vitamin, or folic acid vitamin in the month before they got pregnant. Only around one-third (34.1%) reported taking a vitamin every day of the week.

The prevalence of no vitamin use was significantly higher among:

- Non-Hispanic Black women, Hispanic women, and non-Hispanic women of other/mixed race, compared to non-Hispanic White women
- Women under 20 years old or 20-24 years old, compared to women who were 25-34 years old or 35+ years old
- Women who received WIC food during pregnancy, compared to those who did not receive WIC
- Women living in rural counties, compared to women living in urban counties

Lack of vitamin use in the month before pregnancy was also correlated with unintended pregnancy. Nearly three in four women who had not intended to become pregnant (70.0%) or who had been unsure of what they wanted (71.1%) reported no vitamin use – significantly higher than the proportion among women who had intended to become pregnant (40.0%). Women who received late or no prenatal care were also less likely to have taken a vitamin containing folic acid in the month before pregnancy.
Post 1
Folic acid is a B vitamin that every cell in the body needs for healthy growth and development. Taken before pregnancy and during early pregnancy, folic acid can help protect baby from developing neural tube defects (NTD) such as anencephaly and spina bifida.

Source: March of Dimes, retrieved from https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/folic-acid.aspx

Post 2
Taking 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day before getting pregnant and during early pregnancy, may help prevent 70% of neural tube defects.

Source: March of Dimes, retrieved from https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/folic-acid.aspx

Post 3
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all women of reproductive age take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid each day, in addition to consuming food with folate, to help prevent some major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine. Foods rich in folate include:

- Dark, leafy vegetables like spinach or kale
- Beans such as lentils and black beans
- Asparagus
- Peas
- Eggs
- Avocados
- Oranges or Orange Juice
- Strawberries
- Bananas
- Melons

Source: Centers for Disease Control, retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/about.html

References