

# Folic Acid Awareness Week

January 3-9, 2022 | #Best4YouBest4Baby

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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> During pregnancy, a prenatal vitamin that has 600 micrograms of folic acid in it should be taken every day.<sup>2</sup>














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.<sup>2</sup>

### 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

### Folic acid can be found in:

 Asparagus	 Broccoli	 Peanuts	 Lemons	 Melons
 Avocados	 Eggs	 Oranges	 Bananas	 Strawberries
 Dark green leafy vegetables like spinach and Romaine lettuce	 Beans like lentils, pinto beans and black beans	 Peas		

### Foods that can be fortified with folic acid include:

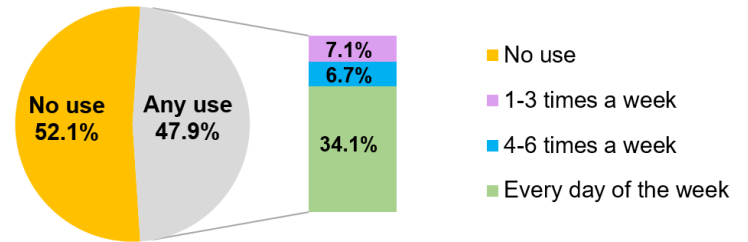
 Bread	 Breakfast cereal	 Cornmeal	 Flour	 Pasta
 White rice	 Products made from a kind of flour called corn masa like tortillas, tortilla chips, taco shells, tamales and pupusas			

# PRAMS Data

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.

## Frequency of Vitamin Use in the Month Before Pregnancy Among Kansas Women with a Recent Live Birth

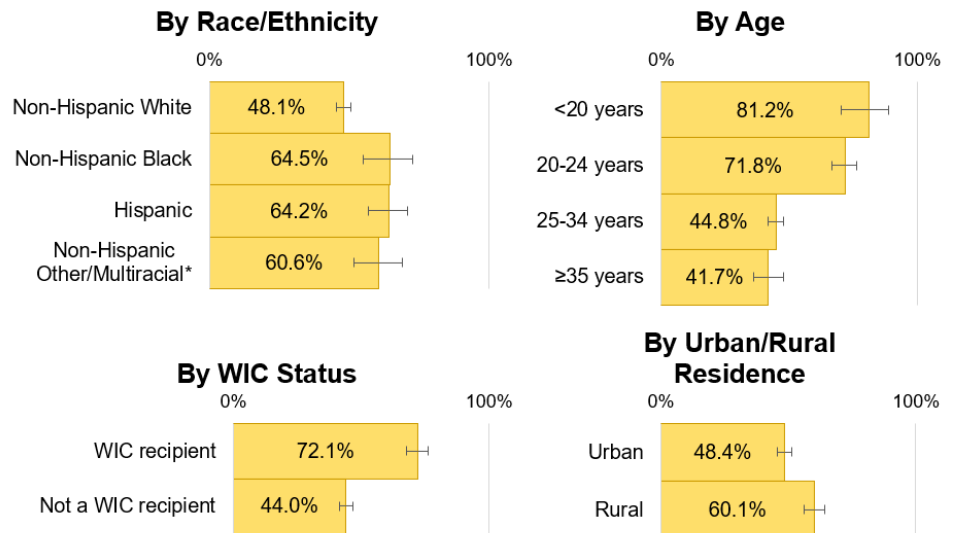


Source: Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2017-2019

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

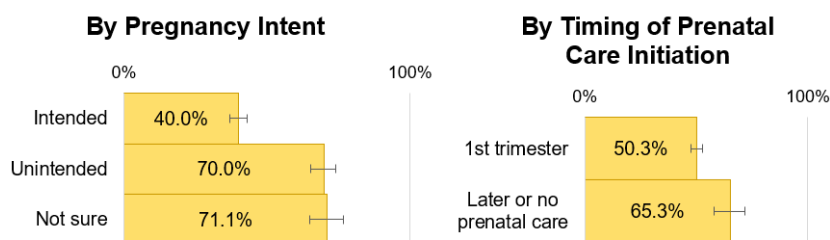
## Weighted Percent of Kansas Women with a Recent Live Birth Who Reported Not Taking a Vitamin in the Month Before Pregnancy



\* Includes Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, other race, and multiracial. Vitamin use included taking a multivitamin, prenatal vitamin, or folic acid vitamin. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Source: Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, 2017-2019

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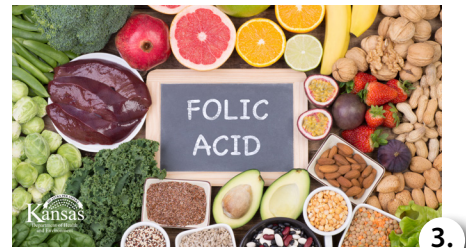
Source: Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, 2017-2019

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.

# Folic Acid Resources

- **Baby Center:** [Folic acid benefits during pregnancy | BabyCenter](#)
- **March of Dimes:** [Folic acid | March of Dimes](#)
- **Centers for Disease Control:** [Folic acid | CDC](#)
- **Centers for Disease Control:** [Recommendations: Women & Folic Acid | CDC](#)
- **Centers for Disease Control:** [MTHFR Gene, Folic Acid, and Preventing Neural Tube Defects | CDC](#)
- **Office of Women's Health:** [Folic acid | OASH](#)

## Social Media Messages



The Kansas Department of Health and Environment created these graphics and sample posts to help you raise awareness about Folic Acid in Pregnancy. Posts can be customized to include your community-specific information. Hashtag suggestion: #Best4YouBest4Baby

### 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

1. National Today, retrieved from <https://nationaltoday.com/folic-acid-awareness-week/#:~:text=FO-LIC%20ACID%20AWARENESS%20WEEK%20%2D%20January,%2D9%2C%202022%20%2D%20National%20Today>
2. March of Dimes, retrieved from <https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/folic-acid.aspx>
3. Centers for Disease Control, re-trieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/about.html>
4. Mayo Clinic, retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-sup-plements-folate/art-20364625>