



Beating Birth Defects

(NAPSA)—Evidence shows that taking a vitamin every day can help decrease a person's risk of having a child born with a life-long birth defect.

Spina bifida is the most common, permanently disabling birth defect in the United States. The condition, which occurs in one out of every 1,000 births, involves an incomplete closure of the spine. Symptoms vary from paralysis, to loss of bowel and bladder control, to learning disabilities.

However, many people with spina bifida lead full and productive lives. Science and medicine have advanced to the point where spina bifida has become more manageable—and possibly preventable.

Recent studies have shown that women who take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of the B-vitamin, folic acid, every day can reduce the risk of spina bifida in offspring by as much as 75 percent. Additional studies indicate that men may be able to reduce the chances of birth defects in their offspring by taking the vitamin as well.

Women who have a child with spina bifida or have spina bifida themselves need ten times more folic acid, 4,000 micrograms, by prescription to reduce the risk of having another pregnancy affected by spina bifida. Men and women can take folic acid to reduce their chances of passing birth defects on to their children.

According to the Spina Bifida Association of America, folic acid helps build healthy cells. The process is cumulative and takes time.

Since birth defects like spina



Studies show taking folic acid every day can reduce the chance of spina bifida—a common birth defect in the U.S.

bifida occur during the first month of pregnancy—before most women know they are pregnant—it is important for both men and women to take the vitamin every day, even when not attempting to conceive.

Many factors affect a pregnancy. Taking folic acid before and during pregnancy is no guarantee, but it can help reduce the risk of birth defects like spina bifida.

In addition to vitamin supplements, folic acid is found in foods such as dark green leafy vegetables, oranges and fortified breads and cereals.

The Spina Bifida Association of America is currently running a “Create A Buzz” campaign to encourage friends and family to share information about the benefits of taking folic acid supplements.

For more information, call the Spina Bifida Association of America at 1-800-621-3141, e-mail sbaa@sbaa.org or visit the Web site at www.sbaa.org.