



# WOMEN'S HEALTH

## Folic Acid: A Simple Solution For A Serious Problem

(NAPSA)—Many women may not realize it, but something as devastating as birth defects can be prevented with something as simple as a folic acid supplement.

Folic acid—a B vitamin—helps to prevent birth defects when it is taken by women in childbearing years and during the first few weeks of a pregnancy.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 2,500 babies are born with birth defects every year.

Spina bifida—one of the common birth defects that can be prevented by folic acid—is the leading cause of childhood paralysis and can cause bladder and bowel control problems. Anencephaly is a fatal condition in which a baby is born with a severely underdeveloped brain and skull.

Several major medical associations—including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the CDC—now recommend that all women of childbearing age take folic acid daily to prevent birth defects. One of the easiest ways to get enough folic acid is through nutritional supplements.

According to Bill Benda, MD, Director of Medical and Public Affairs of the National Integrative Medicine Council, “Because birth control pills reduce folate levels, women on birth control pills should consider folic acid supplementation to sustain recommended folate levels.”



### Supplements help women in childbearing years get enough folic acid.

Experts recommend women in the target group take 400 micrograms of folic acid daily and 600 micrograms during pregnancy. Adults should not exceed 1,000 micrograms daily.

Folic acid is also available through leafy green vegetables, citrus fruits, beans and many fortified whole grain products. However, most women don't get enough folic acid through their diet, so supplementation is often needed to get the beneficial amount.

For more information about the National Integrative Medicine Council, visit their Web site at [www.nimc.org](http://www.nimc.org).

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