



Folic Acid and Pregnancy

By Thuy Nguyen

January 8 - 14, 2017 is [National Folic Acid Awareness Week](#). Folic Acid is important to “EVERYONE.” It may improve heart health and help prevent some cancers. It is especially most important to any woman who wants to become pregnant.

January is also [National Birth Defects Prevention Month](#). Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies in the United States. Every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a

birth defect. Birth defects cause 1 in every 5 deaths during the first year of life. It is a condition that causes lifelong challenges.

Back in 1989, and being pregnant with my first child, I had never heard of Folic Acid. I never knew what it could do for me and my baby. I understand that Folic Acid is still a controversial topic to many childbearing women. Recent studies have shown that Folic Acid can help prevent up to 70% of some serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects, such as Spina Bifida and anencephaly.

Not all birth defects can be prevented but there are things a woman can do to prepare themselves for a healthy pregnancy.

Stay fit by exercising and eating a healthy diet that contains veggies, grains, protein, fruits and dairy. Adopt healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant.

Visit and consult with your healthcare provider regularly. It is very important to see the physician throughout pregnancy as well as keep all prenatal appointments. Consume 400 micrograms of folic acid every day before and during pregnancy. Avoid smoking and alcohol.

Whether you plan to get pregnant or not, [it is recommended that every woman takes 400 micrograms of Folic Acid on a daily basis](#). Folic acid is sometimes called folate and is a “water-soluble” B-vitamin, which means it does not stay in your body for very long. It helps build healthy cell growths and development. It can be found in orange juice, fortified cereals or grains, and leafy greens, such as kale or spinach.

For additional information on Folic Acid, please visit the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [Spina Bifida Association](#).



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