

# Resolve to Advise Your Patients to Take Folic Acid Prior to and During Pregnancy

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Folic acid is one of the B vitamins essential to the process of growing normal, healthy cells. It has been shown that taking the appropriate amount of folic acid (400 micrograms daily) before and during pregnancy, in the form of a pill or from food sources, can help to prevent from 50 to 70 percent of neural tube defects.

Neural tube defects are birth defects that affect the brain and spine. It is important to instruct women of childbearing age to get enough folic acid.

One way to effectively integrate folic acid counseling into daily office routines is to assign a point person for folic acid who will essentially guide women through the process of acquiring materials and learning about folic acid. In this way, no woman of childbearing age will be missed in a given practice setting.

If that method does not work, try instructing your receptionist to give women of childbearing age in your practice information on folic acid and point out other resources where more information can be found. The receptionist can also have this same group of women fill out a questionnaire on folic acid. Using a question-



naire allows the health care team to know where to start in educating their clients on the importance of getting enough folic acid.

Another method of introducing folic acid education into a practice is to have nursing staff routinely ask patients questions about intake of medications, vitamins, supplements and nutrition. This will provide the practice a consistent method of collecting information, not only on folic acid intake, but on a broader scale of what things their clients consume.

Whichever method is chosen, the important thing is to provide folic acid information in a consistent and non-threatening manner. In addition, through the strategic placement of folic acid posters and other educational materials, both the women served in a clinic and the staff serving them are reminded to discuss the importance of folic acid intake.

For more information on the importance of folic acid before and during pregnancy go to: [www.marchofdimers.com/professionals/19695\\_1151.asp](http://www.marchofdimers.com/professionals/19695_1151.asp).