

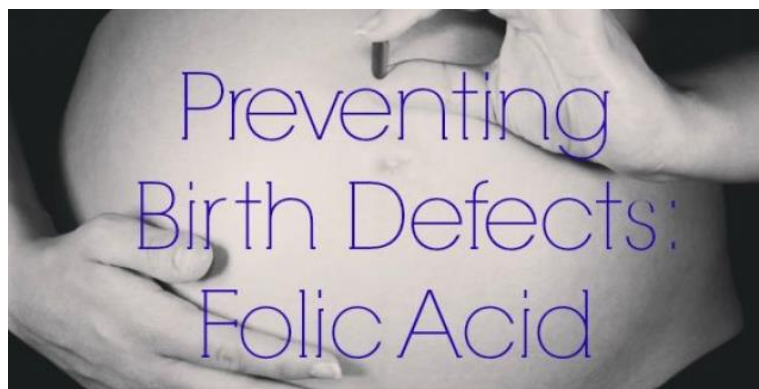


**Kentucky Public Health**

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## **Folic Acid: A Critical Component in Preventing Birth Defects**

*52 Weeks of Public Health Spotlight: Folic Acid Awareness*



**Released January 17, 2018**



**FRANKFORT, Ky. (January 17, 2018)** – As part of National Folic Acid Awareness Week, the Kentucky Department for Public Health within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services is raising awareness about how folic acid can play a critical role in preventing birth defects.

Everyone, regardless of age needs folic acid, but it is particularly important for women who are pregnant. If you have consumed enough folic acid before and during your early pregnancy, folic acid can prevent many of the serious birth defects of the baby's brain and spine. Getting 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid in your diet every day at least a month before becoming pregnant can help prevent serious birth defects. It takes a small effort, but it makes a big difference. Even if you are not planning to become pregnant, folic acid is still important. Folic acid is a B vitamin that our bodies use to make new cells.

It is also important to eat a diet rich in folate. Folate is a form of the B vitamin folic acid. Folate is found naturally in some foods such as leafy, dark green vegetables, citrus fruits and juices and beans. If you get an upset stomach from taking a multivitamin, try taking it with meals or just before bed. If you have trouble taking pills, you can try a multivitamin that is gummy or chewable. Also, be sure to take your multivitamin with a full glass of water.

Here are three ways to get the recommended daily amount of this important nutrient:

- **Make It Quick!** A fast way to get your daily dose of folic acid is to take a multivitamin every day. Check the label to be sure it contains the recommended daily amount of 400 mcg.
- **Make It Easy!** Many breakfast cereals contain 100% of the recommended daily amount of folic acid per serving. Folic acid is added to foods such as enriched breads, pastas, rice and cereals. Check the Nutrition Facts Label on the food packaging.
- **Make It Delicious!** Give your vitamin intake a boost by enjoying a healthy smoothie. Blend all these ingredients together for a nutritious tropical smoothie: 1 small banana, ½ cup mango, ½ cup pineapple, ¾ cup orange juice and ice.

Interested in learning more about healthy Kentucky lifestyle? Through our 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health will spotlight public health issues as well as highlight services and resources available to Kentuckians statewide. Follow us on [Facebook](#) for your weekly tip.