

Facts about Folate¹

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Why do we need folate?

Folate is one of the B vitamins. The synthetic form of this vitamin is folic acid. Folate helps make DNA and amino acids. DNA is the genetic material found in all cells of the body. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins.



Everyone needs folate. It's especially important for women who can become pregnant.

Pregnant and nursing women, growing children, and elders also need plenty of folate.

What happens if we don't get enough folate?

Without folate your body can't make DNA and amino acids. This is a concern for pregnant women and children. Eating high-folate foods may reduce your chances of developing anemia, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Getting enough folate before becoming pregnant reduces a woman's risk of having a baby with certain birth defects.

How much folate do we need?

The following table lists recommended daily intakes of folate:

Life Stage	Folate (µg/day)
Men, ages 19+	400
Women, ages 19+	400
Pregnancy	600
Lactation	500
µg = micrograms	

How can we get enough folate?

To get 400 µg of folate, you can eat foods that are naturally high in folate. Some of the best food sources are green leafy vegetables, like spinach, collards, and kale.



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Other foods that are high in folate are orange juice, legumes (beans and lentils), and peanuts.



You can also eat foods that are fortified with folic acid. Getting enough folate is easy if you eat fortified grain foods. Check food labels to

see if folic acid has been added. Here is a sample ingredient list from a food label:

Ingredients: Apples, Enriched Wheat Flour (Contains Niacin, Reduced Iron, Thiamine Mononitrate, Riboflavin, and **Folic Acid**), Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil, Water, Sugar, Food Starch-Modified, Salt, Cinnamon, Cornstarch

Here are some foods and the amount of folate they contain:

FOOD	FOLATE ($\mu\text{g}/\text{serving}$)
Fortified cereal, 1 serving	100-400
Spinach, frozen, 1/2 cup cooked	100
Peanuts, dry roasted 1/2 cup	80
Romaine, 1 cup shredded	75
Kidney beans, 1/2 cup cooked	60
Orange juice, 3/4 cup	55
Orange, 1 medium	45
μg = micrograms	

How should foods be prepared to keep the folate content?

When cooking foods that contain folate, use as little water as you can. Avoid overcooking.

Steaming or cooking in a microwave works well for most foods.



What about supplements?

If you don't get enough folate from foods, you can take a multivitamin that contains folic acid. A folic acid supplement is



recommended for some people with a special need for folate.

This includes women who can become pregnant.

Where can I get more information?

The Family and Consumer Sciences agent at your local Extension office may have written information and nutrition classes for you to attend. Your doctor or a registered dietitian (RD) can provide reliable information to you.

Reliable nutrition information may be found on the Internet at the following sites:

<http://nutrition.gov>
<http://seniors.gov>

