



# FOLIC ACID

Folic acid is a member of the B-vitamin family best known for its role in preventing birth defects. It may also be listed as folate or folinic acid.

## FOLIC ACID CAN HELP...

- Prevent colon cancer
- Reduce risk of neural tube defects in pregnancy
- Reduce risk of heart disease and osteoporosis
- Treat cervical dysplasia and depression

## CONSIDER FOLIC ACID IF YOU...

- Are pregnant or considering becoming pregnant
- Are a female of childbearing age
- Consume large amounts of alcohol
- Have high blood levels of homocysteine
- Have a malabsorption disorder or liver or kidney disease

## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH SHOWS...

Folic acid supplementation at 400 mcg per day would reduce the number of heart attacks in the U.S. by 10 percent annually. Research has also found that the current level of folic acid fortification in food is inadequate to fully prevent neural tube defects.

**ALWAYS TALK TO YOUR  
DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR  
SUPPLEMENT PLAN.**



**elephant**  
PHARM

# HOW AND HOW MUCH?

**Available forms** – Folinic acid is the most active form. For general health and in pregnancy, folic acid is typically taken as part of a multi-vitamin.

**Common adult dosage** – 400 mcg per day; 600 mcg per day in pregnancy. Therapeutic dosage may range from 400 mcg to 10 mg and should be monitored by a doctor.

**Food sources** – Legumes, leafy green vegetables, wheat germ, brewer's yeast, and asparagus. Keep in mind that folic acid from dietary sources is not as well absorbed as it is from supplements.

## TIPS & TIDBITS

- Elevated homocysteine is considered a risk factor for osteoporosis and heart disease. Folic acid works together with vitamins B12 and B6 to lower homocysteine levels in the blood, so if this is your goal, look for a supplement that includes all three.
- Exposure to heat and light degrades the potency of folic acid. Be sure to check supplements for an expiration date and store them in a dark, cool place.

## SAFETY FIRST

- Certain drugs and conditions do not mix well with folic acid. Talk with your doctor first if you:
  - Have epilepsy or are on chronic anticonvulsant therapy
  - Are on estrogen therapy or birth control pills
  - Take metformin, triamterene (a diuretic), sulfasalazine, methotrexate, or barbiturates (used as sedatives)
- Folic acid supplementation can mask an underlying deficiency of vitamin B12. Therefore, always include vitamin B12 if you are supplementing with folic acid.