

Folic Acid and Neural Tube Defects (including Spina Bifida)

Take one folic acid tablet daily

Spina bifida is a serious, lifelong condition that affects babies from birth, causing walking, bladder and bowel problems. Spina bifida is the most common type of Neural Tube Defect (NTD). More than half of the babies born with NTDs are either stillborn or die shortly after birth. Women can reduce, though not entirely prevent, the risk of NTDs by taking the vitamin folic acid as a daily tablet.

- Take one 0.8 milligram (mg)/800 microgram (mcg or μg)* folic acid tablet daily.
- If planning a pregnancy, take the tablet daily for at least 4 weeks before you might become pregnant.
- Continue taking the tablet daily until the end of week 12 of your pregnancy.
- If you find you are pregnant during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, you should take the tablet from that point until the end of week 12.
- The recommended registered tablet can be purchased at pharmacies (or at a lower cost, when prescribed by your doctor or midwife).



It is also important to eat a healthy, varied diet. See *Eating for Healthy Pregnant Women* code HE1805 for further information.

Important sources of folate and/or folic acid in foods include: well-washed, fresh, raw or lightly cooked leafy green vegetables such as broccoli and spinach, fruits and juices such as orange juice, some fortified breads and cereals, and dried beans and peas.

For further information, contact a health professional such as your doctor, midwife, dietitian, nurse or pharmacist.

* A 5mg tablet is also available for those women at high-risk of a NTD-affected pregnancy.

Turn over for information on iodine supplementation when pregnant and breastfeeding.

