

What you need to know if your physician has recommended an extra folic acid supplement

Folic Acid

Folic acid, also known as Folate, belongs to the vitamin B group; it is also known as B-9. Folic acid is important for brain function, mental health, emotional health and the production of DNA and RNA. Folic acid also helps iron function properly in your body in addition to aiding in the formation of red blood cells (RBC). Pregnant women require more folic acid than women who are not pregnant. Taking folic acid during pregnancy can also help prevent birth defects related to the spine and brain.



Daily Recommended Doses

Folic acid: To reduce the risk of having a child with neural tube defects, women who are trying to become pregnant should get 600 micrograms (mcg) of folate or folic acid a day through diet and supplements. Other healthy adults — both men and women — need only 400 mcg a day.

- *If you have had a child born with a neural tube defect or if you have a high-risk condition that puts you at greater risk of having a child with certain birth defects, your physician may advise you to take a larger dose of folic acid — recommended 4 milligrams (mg)/day.*



Possible Side Effects of Supplements

Most adults do not experience any side effects when consuming the recommended amount each day. Higher doses of folic acid might cause gastrointestinal upset, sleep disorders, and irritability.

Do's and Don'ts While Taking Supplements

Only a small portion of supplements are absorbed so if you are placed on a higher dose you must separate the doses according to the directions.

Please advise your physician if you are on seizure medication, diabetes medication, sleeping pills, or antibiotics because these types of medications can lower the amount of folic acid you absorb.

Diet

It's always best to obtain nutrients from food. Include plenty of foods that offer these nutrients. Almost any kind of green leafy vegetable, such as Brussels sprouts and spinach, will supply an adequate amount of folic acid. Other sources of folic acid include orange juice, avocado, salmon, whole grains and citrus fruits.

