

On-Line Resources

Fairfax County Saving Babies Initiative:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/pcs

Others:

www.cdc.gov/women

www.marchofdimes.com

www.4women.gov



Care for One Another

Women, let's all pay attention to how much folic acid we are taking - we can improve our own health and the health of our unborn babies.

Men, tell your girlfriends and wives.

Grandmas, tell your daughters and granddaughters.

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Articles in this newsletter are not a substitute for the care and advice of medical professionals. When you have a question or need medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, consult your physician.

This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services including emergency and urgent care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health, blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community we serve through excellence in patient care, education and research.

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For Your Health

A Mothers' Day Gift

"Happy Mothers' Day" is a greeting many women love to hear. One start to a joyful Mothers' Day is the conception and birth of a healthy baby. So sharpen your pencil and take this Mothers' Day quiz. And it's not for women only!

Q 1: What nutrient is vitally important for all future mothers to be?

A: **Folic Acid - Simple to Get, Essential to Have**

Did You Know That...

two thirds of women in the United States do not get enough folic acid in their diet? Folic acid is important because if pregnant women do not get enough folic acid in their diet, it can cause serious birth defects in their babies. Folic acid (also known as folate) is a B vitamin that helps the body to make new cells. It is also essential for the proper development of unborn babies in the first few weeks of pregnancy.

Question 2:

When is the Folic Acid Needed?

A: The dilemma is that folic acid is needed even *before* a woman becomes pregnant. The neural tube which becomes the spinal cord, spine, brain and skull forms in a growing baby during the first few weeks after conception. If a pregnant woman does not have enough folic acid *already in her body* before this development begins, the baby growing in the womb may end up with a neural tube defect.



Neural tube defects cause serious problems in the spine or brain ranging from learning disabilities to paralysis and even death of the baby. Because up to 50% of pregnancies in this country are unplanned, it's critical that all women who are able to have children get enough folic acid in their diet in case they do become pregnant.

The Word of Faith

From Proverbs 31 in the Hebrew Scriptures:

“Who can find a wise woman?

When you find yourself to be a wise woman, your children will stand up and call you blessed.”

Question 3:

Where Do I Get the Folic Acid?

A: Folic acid (folate) is easy to find. It can be found naturally in fruits, green, leafy vegetables and dried beans and peas. Some foods have been fortified (meaning folic acid has been added to the food). Certain flours, grain products (rice, pasta) and cereals have folate added. You can look at the food label to see if folate is listed as one of the ingredients. You can also take a supplement – either a single folic acid pill or a multivitamin. Folic acid is most effective when you eat a diet rich in the vitamin and also take a supplement.

Question 4:

How Much Folic Acid Do I Need?

A: The recommended daily amount is 400 micrograms (mcg) or 0.4 milligrams (mg). Over 80% of neural tube defects can be prevented by getting 400 mcg of folic acid each day.

Question 5:

What About Older Women and Men?

A: The importance of folic acid to women in the prevention of devastating birth defects is well known. The benefits of folic acid may not be limited to women of child-bearing age. Although there is still more research needed, folic acid has also been associated with a reduced risk for heart disease, stroke, some forms of cancer and Alzheimer's.