Folic Acid

- Folic acid and folate are terms used to describe a complex B vitamin that is important to women's health.\(^1\)

- Current recommendations are for all women of childbearing age to consume 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.\(^1\)

- Folic acid, if taken before and during the first weeks of pregnancy, protects against neural tube defects, a severe form of brain and spine birth defects.\(^1\)

- Women should consult their doctor about folic acid when planning a pregnancy; especially if on medication to treat digestive disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, seizures or sleep disorders.\(^2\)

### What Foods Contain Folic Acid?\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Foods</th>
<th>Enriched Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Peas</td>
<td>Breads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romaine Lettuce</td>
<td>Flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>Pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Juice</td>
<td>Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>Breakfast Cereal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lentils</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This list does not include all foods containing folic acid*

### Folic Acid Supplementation

- Prenatal and many multi-vitamins contain the necessary daily value of folic acid.\(^2\)

- Folic acid from a vitamin or enriched foods is more readily absorbed by the bloodstream than natural folate.\(^3\)

- Do not exceed 1,000 micrograms of folic acid daily to avoid masking potential vitamin B12 deficiency.\(^2\)

### Multivitamin Use in Wyoming

**Multivitamin Intake the Month Before Pregnancy, WY PRAMS 2007-2010**

- **Everyday** 30.5%
- **4-6 times/week** 5.8%
- **1-3 times/week** 9.0%
- **Didn't take Vitamin** 54.6%

Between 2007 and 2010, 54.6% of Wyoming women did not take a multivitamin in the month before pregnancy.

For more information about WY PRAMS visit: [http://www.health.wyo.gov/familyhealth/mchep/prams.html](http://www.health.wyo.gov/familyhealth/mchep/prams.html)

Source: WY PRAMS
Pregnancy Intention
An unintended pregnancy is a pregnancy that is mistimed, unplanned, or unwanted at the time of conception. Data from the Wyoming PRAMS survey from 2007 to 2010 indicate that 41.1% of live births in Wyoming were unintended. Among women that intended to become pregnant in Wyoming between 2007 and 2010, 39.5% consumed a daily multivitamin, significantly higher than consumption among women who had an unintended pregnancy (17.9%). Folic acid is critical in the months before pregnancy and the first weeks of pregnancy to help prevent birth defects.

Neural Tubal Defects
A neural tube defect (NTD) is a birth defect of the brain and spinal cord; most often anencephaly or spina bifida. Anencephaly is the absence of most or all of the brain and skull; with rare exception it is fatal at birth. Spinal NTDs, collectively called spina bifida, can occur anywhere along the spinal column and are found in varying degrees of severity. The rate of spina bifida and anencephaly have declined significantly since mandatory folic acid fortification of grain was implemented in the United States in 1998. Rates have declined by 30% for spina bifida and 50% for anencephaly during this time frame. Similar rates of NTDs have been observed in Wyoming and nationally since fortification (Figure).

References:
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recommendations for the Use of Folic Acid to Reduce the Number of Cases of Spina Bifida and Other Neural Tube Defects. In: Recommendations and Reports. MMWR 41 (RR-14); 001; 1992 September 11.