



A Minute of Health with CDC

Folate Status in Women of Childbearing Age, by Race/Ethnicity --- United States, 1999--2000, 2001--2002, and 2003--2004

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Babies may be born with neural tube defects that affect their brain or spinal cord if their mothers don't get enough folic acid during their pregnancy. In 1992, the Public Health Service recommended that all women, age 15 to 44 who could become pregnant take 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. By 1998, the Food and Drug Administration required that all enriched flour be fortified with folic acid. Still, only about 1 out of 3 women get enough folic acid each day.

Even women who aren't planning to get pregnant should take folic acid. Many pregnancies aren't planned and a woman may not know for a month or two that she's pregnant. By then, it will be too late to start taking folic acid since the brain and spinal cord – the neural tube – are among the first structures to develop in the early weeks of pregnancy. The best way to ensure getting enough folic acid is to take 400 micrograms daily as a supplement.

Be sure to join us next week on *A Minute of Health with CDC*.

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