

## Benefits of Folic Acid

Folic acid, a water soluble B vitamin, occurs naturally in food and can also be taken as food supplements.

Naturally occurring sources of folic acid includes green leaf vegetables (spinach, turnip), poultry, pork, shellfish, peas beans, liver, cereal and citrus fruits. Folic acid is one of the necessary elements required for production and maintenance of human cell.

Folic acid deficiency and diseases:

Folic acid deficiency may cause various disorders. Some of these are highlighted below.

? Folic acid deficiency may cause weakness, poor growth, graying hair, inflammation of the tongue, palpitations and behavioral disorder.

? Folic acid deficiency is also associated with common stomach disorders including diarrhea, mouth ulcer and peptic ulcer, loss of appetite and weight loss.

? Folic acid deficiency in pregnant women may cause premature delivery, low birth weight of infants and infants with neural tube defects (NTD s).

? Anemia is sometimes associated with the advanced stage of folic acid deficiency.

? You may need increased folic acid intake if you are anemic, have kidney or liver disease, pregnant or breast-feeding. In all such cases you should consult your doctor before taking folic acid supplements.

? The maximum folic acid intake should be limited to 1000 micro grams per day or as directed by the health care provider.

? Some other medications may interact with folic acid includes medicines for epilepsy, medicines for controlling blood sugar, methotrexate (medicines for treating cancer) and diuretics. If you are taking any of these medicines, you should contact your doctor.

? If you are 50 years of age, you should carry out your vitamin B 12 level before taking supplemental diet of folic acid, as there are chances of interaction between B12 vitamins and folic acid.

Folic acid benefits:

Role of folic acid during pregnancy:

Neural tube defects (NTD s) is a major defect of brain and spine in babies causing damage to the brain or spine. The major NTD s include spina bifida ( spine problem) and

Anencephaly (brain problem) and up to 70% of these NTD s can be prevented by taking enough folic acid every day before conception and during pregnancy.

A woman is likely to be at higher risk to deliver a NTD s affected baby if she has a previous NTD s affected pregnancy, is diabetic, takes medicine to treat epilepsy and is of Hispanic ethnicity.

Every woman, who is likely to become pregnant, should take 400 micro grams of folic acid every day. Consuming supplemental folic acid in addition to a healthy folic acid rich diet before and during pregnancy significantly reduces the risk of having neural tube defects in babies.

Spina Bifida and Anencephaly disorders:

Spina bifida is a spine disorder where part of the spine at the lower end is damaged and a sack of fluid is entrapped in the baby's back. Most children born with this spinal disorder survive a full life and often have lifelong symptoms including unable to move lower parts of the body, loss of bowel, bladder and fluid pressure to the brain.

Anencephaly is a brain disorder where part of the brain skull bones may not form in babies. Most of the babies having this defect die before or just after birth.

Role of folic acid and heart disease:

Low concentration of folic acid may increase the amino acid homocysteine in the blood levels and consequently increases the risk of heart disease. High level of homocysteine may damage the coronary arteries or can cause the blood clots, however there is no evidence that supplemented folic acid will reduce the risk of heart disease.

Role of folic acid and cancer:

Folic acid is one of the essential elements involved in the synthesis of DNA and its deficiency may cause defects in DNA and consequently may lead to cancer. There are enough evidence to conclude that the deficiency of folic acid is associated with the increased risk of breast, colon and pancreatic cancer, however it is not advisable to supplement folic acid for reducing the risk of such cancers.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

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