

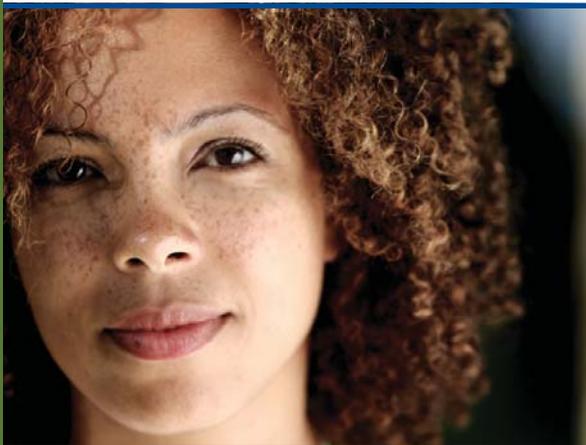
## What is a neural tube defect (NTD)?

About 250 babies are born in Texas every year with a birth defect called a "neural tube defect," or NTD. Spina bifida and anencephaly are the main types of NTDs.

Spina bifida, also called myelomeningocele, means the baby's spine did not close very early in the pregnancy. Often these babies also have a defect called "hydrocephaly." The children may be quite healthy in many ways but may also have problems walking and going to the bathroom.

Anencephaly means that the baby's skull did not close all the way early in pregnancy. When the skull does not form, the brain also does not grow correctly. This is very serious, and these babies do not survive long after they are born, or may even die before birth.

**Research has shown that taking folic acid before pregnancy helps prevent these birth defects!**



## Get the vitamins that are right for you

If you have had a baby with anencephaly or spina bifida before and ...

... you are planning another pregnancy:

You need 4 mg (4000 mcg) of folic acid per day. See your doctor about a high-dose folic acid prescription before stopping birth control.

... you are currently not planning another pregnancy:

You need 0.4 mg (400 mcg). This is the amount found in most multivitamins and some fortified foods.

### Get the right amount!

4.0 milligrams (mg) = 4000 micrograms (mcg or  $\mu$ )

which is 10 times as much as

0.4 milligrams (mg) = 400 micrograms (mcg or  $\mu$ )

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size .75 cup	
Servings Per Container 11	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 110	Calories from Fat 15
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 90mg	4%
Potassium 100mg	3%
Dietary Fiber 5g	18%
Soluble Fiber 1g	
Insoluble Fiber 4g	
Sugars 5g	
Other Carbohydrate 15g	
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A	0%
Vitamin C	50%
Calcium	0%
Iron	10%
Vitamin E	100%
Vitamin B6	100%
<b>Folic Acid</b>	<b>100%</b>
Vitamin B12	100%
Phosphorus	10%
Magnesium	25%
Zinc	10%

\*Percent daily values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

This cereal has 0.4 mg (400 mcg) of folic acid in each serving.

## About the Texas Birth Defects Registry

The Texas Birth Defects Registry is a program at the Texas Department of State Health Services that collects information about babies born with birth defects. We do this to help answer some important questions about birth defects. For example, how often are children born with birth defects? Do birth defects affect some groups more than others? What causes different types of birth defects? Are there ways to prevent them? We also want to help Texas children born with a birth defect and their families get the help they need.

The Texas Birth Defects Registry has very strict rules about your privacy and about keeping personal medical information confidential.

For more information, please contact:

**Texas Birth Defects Registry**  
Texas Department of State Health Services  
P.O. Box 149347, MC 1964  
Austin, TX 78714-9347  
Phone: (512) 458-7232 or  
1-888-963-7111, Ext. 7232  
Fax: (512) 458-7330  
E-mail: [birthdefects@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:birthdefects@dshs.state.tx.us)  
[www.dshs.state.tx.us/birthdefects](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/birthdefects)



# Folic Acid and Neural Tube Defects

*All women need folic acid, but some women need it more.*



*Make a simple decision to take care of your health: Take folic acid.*

## Hi, I'm Laura...

*I just had a baby with anencephaly. The doctor said something about folic acid. What is it? Who can I talk to if I have questions?*



Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps your body function. Neural tube defects sometimes happen because the mother does not have enough folic acid in her body around the time she gets pregnant. Taking folic acid is a good health habit whether or not you are pregnant. To find out more, you can call health professionals at the Pregnancy Risk Line: (800) 733-4727.

## Hi, I'm Natasha...

*I had a baby with spina bifida. My doctor said I should take folic acid even though I am not planning to have another baby. Is this true? How much folic acid do I need and where do I get it?*

Yes. Folic acid isn't just about preventing birth defects it also may help your own health. You should get 0.4 mg (400 mcg) of folic acid every day by taking a multivitamin or through foods that are specially fortified with folic acid, like pasta, bread, and breakfast cereal. Read the nutrition label to see how much folic acid they give you.



## Hi, I'm Maria...

*I had a baby with a neural tube defect. My husband and I are talking about having another baby. What are the chances that this baby will also have a neural tube defect? What dose of folic acid do I need? How much do these vitamins cost?*

Well, Maria, compared to other women, you are much more likely to have another baby with a neural tube defect. Folic acid can help you reduce your risk. You need to take vitamins with 4 mg (4000 mcg) of folic acid every day. These vitamins are available only by prescription. Ask your doctor about taking these vitamins before becoming pregnant.

You may qualify for assistance through programs such as the Texas Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) or Medicaid. To find out if you qualify, call 2-1-1 anywhere in Texas, or go online to [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com).



## Fact or Fiction?



*Only women who are pregnant need folic acid vitamins.*

**Fiction!** All women between the ages of 15-44 should take folic acid vitamins, even if they are not planning a pregnancy. As you probably know, women often get pregnant before planning to, so they need to be taking folic acid, just in case. Also, scientists are discovering that folic acid has other health benefits.

*Vitamins are expensive!*

**Fiction!** A month's worth of multivitamins with folic acid costs as little as one dollar a month when purchased at the grocery store. If you need high-dose folic acid (you have had a baby with anencephaly or spina bifida and are planning another pregnancy), some insurance and public assistance programs will cover these.

*If I have had a baby with anencephaly or spina bifida before and I am planning another pregnancy, I can get enough extra folic acid by taking extra multivitamins.*

**Fiction!** Some of the other vitamins in a multivitamin can be harmful in high doses. Ask your doctor about the best way to get the right amount of folic acid to protect your next child.

*Folic acid vitamins need to be taken every day.*

**Fact!** Water-soluble vitamins like folic acid are not stored in the body and are easily excreted. They must be consumed regularly to maintain health.

*I can't take vitamins because they all make me nauseous.*

**Fiction!** There many ways other than pills make sure you get your daily folic acid. For example, try liquid vitamins, children's chewable (check the label for how much folic acid is in it!), or eat a bowl of breakfast cereal that contains 100% of the daily folic acid recommendation.

*It is important to take folic acid vitamins before you are pregnant.*

**Fact!** Having high folic acid levels is critical before pregnancy and during the first few weeks of pregnancy which is when the baby is growing rapidly. Also, many women do not realize they are pregnant until after the first few weeks so it is better to be healthy from the beginning.

