

## Facts about Folate<sup>1</sup>

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### Why do we need folate?

Folate is one of the B vitamins. Another form of this vitamin is folic acid.



Folate helps make DNA and amino acids. DNA is the genetic material found in all cells of the body. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins.

Everyone needs folate. It's especially important for women who can become pregnant.

Nursing women, growing children, and elders also need plenty of folate.

### What happens if we don't get enough folate?

Without folate, your body can't make DNA and amino acids. Eating high-folate foods may reduce your chances of developing anemia, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Getting enough folate before becoming pregnant reduces a woman's risk of having a baby with certain birth defects.

### How much folate do we need?

The following table lists recommended intakes of folate:

Life Stage	Amount ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{day}$ )
Men, ages 19+	400
Women, ages 19+	400
Pregnancy	600
Lactation	500
$\mu\text{g} = \text{micrograms}$	

### How can we get enough folate?

To get 400  $\mu\text{g}$  of folate, you can eat foods that are naturally high in folate. Some of the best food sources are green leafy vegetables.



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Other foods that are high in folate are orange juice, legumes (beans and lentils), and peanuts.

You can also eat foods that are fortified with folic acid (another form of the vitamin). Getting enough folate is easier now that fortified grain foods are available.

Check food labels to see if folic acid has been added. Here is a sample ingredient list from a food label:

**Ingredients:** Apples, Enriched Wheat Flour (Contains Niacin, Reduced Iron, Thiamine Mononitrate, Riboflavin and **Folic Acid**), Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil, Water, Sugar, Food Starch-modified, Salt, Cinnamon, Cornstarch

Here are some foods and the amount of folate they contain:

FOOD	FOLATE ( $\mu\text{g/serving}$ )
Spinach, 1/2 cup cooked	130
Kidney beans, 1/2 cup cooked	115
Fortified cereal, 1 serving	100
Peanuts, dry roasted 1/2 cup	80
Orange juice, 1 cup	75
Romaine, 1 cup shredded	75
Orange, 1 medium	45
$\mu\text{g} = \text{micrograms}$	

### How should foods be prepared to keep the folate content?



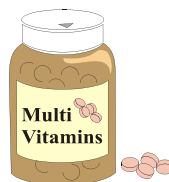
Folate can be destroyed by heating. Fortunately, some food sources, like oranges, are eaten raw.

When cooking foods that contain folate, use as little water as you can. Avoid overcooking. The microwave works well for most foods.



### What about supplements?

If you don't get enough folate from foods, you can take a multi-vitamin that contains folic acid. A folic acid supplement is recommended for some people with a special need for folate. This includes women who can become pregnant.



### Where can I get more information?

The Family and Consumer Sciences agent at your local Extension office may have written information and nutrition classes for you to attend. Also, a registered dietitian (RD) can provide reliable information to you.

Reliable nutrition information may be found on the Internet at the following sites:  
<http://www.fycc.ifas.ufl.edu>  
<http://www.eatright.org>  
<http://www.folicacidnow.net>

