FOODS HIGH IN FOLIC ACID (50-100mcg per serving and above)

- Cooked black eyed beans, brussel sprouts, beef extract, yeast extract, kale, spinach, granary bread, spring greens, broccoli, parsnips and cooked chick peas.

FOODS WITH MEDIUM FOLIC ACID CONTENT (15-50mcg per serving)

- Cooked soya and kidney beans, cauliflower, cooked lentils, green beans, courgette, green pepper, potatoes, iceburg lettuce, oranges, peas, orange juice, baked beans, wholemeal bread, cabbage, yoghurt, white bread, eggs, brown rice, wholegrain pasta.

FOODS FORTIFIED WITH FOLIC ACID

- Look out for the folic acid flash on foods which have been fortified with folic acid.

  - Bread: some breads are fortified with folic acid. It is usually a 'soft grain' bread. A 2 slice serving of one of these will provide approximately 90mcg of folic acid.
  - Cereals: many breakfast cereals are fortified but to widely different levels so it is important to always check the label. Some have over 100mcg per 30g serving.

- Warning: liver is rich in folic acid but you should not eat it if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant because it also contains high levels of vitamin A which could harm your baby.

- Remember over-cooking vegetables destroys folic acid.

Ask your pharmacist or family doctor to give you advice if:

- you’re still not sure about the advice in this leaflet
- you’re already pregnant
- you’re already taking medicine prescribed by your doctor, especially if it is to treat epilepsy
- you have spina bifida or there is a history of spina bifida or another neural tube defect in your family or that of your partner.

You can get further information about folic acid and planning a pregnancy from:

- Your family doctor, practice nurse, health visitor or pharmacist
- NHS Direct on 0845 4647, www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

For further information about spina bifida contact:
The Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH)
42 Park Road
Peterborough PE1 2UQ
Tel: 01733 555988
www.asbah.org

A note on serving sizes

For the purposes of this table, folic acid content has been calculated according to the average portion size for that food. For most fruit and vegetables this is 80g, but is 150ml for fruit juice and 175g for potatoes. Bread is estimated on the basis of 2 slices, rice 180g and beef and yeast extract on a level teaspoon.

References:

- Food Portion Sizes, 2002, RSC;
- The Composition of Food, McCance & Widdowson, 6th Edition;
family and you are in the best of health

- nerves are damaged. This affects babies in the back gap, meaning that the spinal cord and the bones of the spine fails to develop properly and leaves a gap in the back. With spina bifida, for example, the backbone doesn't go on to become the baby's spine, does it? This can cause serious problems, including paralysis and even death. But every day in England and Wales, at least two babies are born with neural tube defects like spina bifida.

- The simplest way to make sure you get enough folic acid to benefit your baby is to take a 400 microgram folic acid supplement every day before you get pregnant. If you might be able to become pregnant, you need to take a folic acid supplement before you stop using a contraceptive method. This means you need to take a folic acid supplement from the time you stop using contraception until the twelfth week of pregnancy. There is no need to continue taking a supplement once you are beyond this time. 

- You need to take a folic acid supplement before you get pregnant, not afterwards. If you find out you are pregnant, you should start taking folic acid supplements straight away. You will need to continue taking a supplement until your twelfth week of pregnancy.

- Is a folic acid supplement really necessary? Yes. The only way to be sure that you get enough folic acid is to take a folic acid supplement every day. Even if you are not trying for a baby or have not started trying for a baby, a daily folic acid supplement will help to prevent neural tube defects.

- Is it better to take a high dose of folic acid or a lower dose? A daily 400 microgram folic acid supplement is usually enough for most women. It is very rare for women to need more than this. 

- What if I'm already pregnant? If you are already pregnant, you need to take a folic acid supplement every day, even if you did not take a supplement before you found out you were pregnant. You need to take a folic acid supplement until at least your twelfth week of pregnancy. 

- Where can I get supplements? Folic acid supplements are small, easy to take, and are easy to find in pharmacies, health food shops and most supermarkets. It is also possible to get folic acid from a multivitamin supplement. It is a water soluble B vitamin. It is available as a supplement and is also used to fortify some foods, such as breads and breakfast cereals and yeast and beef extracts. It is naturally rich in folic acid (such as green vegetables, beans, pulses and oranges) – the amount you can get from a daily diet alone isn’t enough. 

- In fact, it is estimated that you need three times more of these to give you the right amount of folic acid. It is very difficult to eat enough of the foods which contain folic acid every day to get enough folic acid in your body at the moment you might need it. A daily 400 microgram folic acid supplement is usually enough for most women. It is very rare for women to need more than this.

- There are different brands of folic acid which are all equally good, but you should ask your pharmacist if you are not sure which one to take. Make sure you get one that is 400 mcg, 400 µg or 0.4 mg. (This may be written as 0.4 mg or 400 µg.) It is a water soluble B vitamin. It is available as a supplement and is also used to fortify some foods, such as breads and breakfast cereals and yeast and beef extracts. It is also possible to get folic acid from a multivitamin supplement.

- How much folic acid do I need? A daily 400 microgram folic acid supplement is usually enough for most women. It is very rare for women to need more than this. A daily 400 microgram folic acid supplement is usually enough for most women. It is very rare for women to need more than this. 

- What is folic acid? It is a water soluble B vitamin. It is available as a supplement and is also used to fortify some foods, such as breads and breakfast cereals and yeast and beef extracts. It is also possible to get folic acid from a multivitamin supplement. Folic acid is also known as folate when it occurs naturally in a variety of foods such as green vegetables, beans, pulses and oranges – the amount you can get from a daily diet alone isn’t enough. It is very difficult to eat enough of the foods which contain folic acid every day to get enough folic acid in your body at the moment you might need it.

- Therefore, if you are planning a pregnancy, it is particularly important to get advice. This is especially true if you have a family history of neural tube defects.

- The simplest way to make sure you get enough folic acid in your body at the moment you might need it is to take a folic acid supplement every day. Even if you are not trying for a baby or have not started trying for a baby, a daily folic acid supplement will help to prevent neural tube defects. But every day in England and Wales, at least two babies are born with neural tube defects like spina bifida.

- Even if spina bifida doesn't run in your family, you could become pregnant. If you stop using contraception, and are planning a pregnancy, it is a good idea to be sure you have enough folic acid in your body at the moment you might need it.

- If you find out you are pregnant, you should start taking folic acid supplements straight away. You will need to continue taking a supplement until your twelfth week of pregnancy. 

- Why do I need to take folic acid before I get pregnant? Folic acid can greatly reduce the chance of a baby being born with neural tube defects by helping the neural tube close properly before it forms. 

- Folic acid stores in your body for a long time. But while you are trying to get pregnant, it is a good idea to build up your folic acid stores by taking a daily 400 microgram folic acid supplement. It is possible that you might become pregnant before you realise you were trying to get pregnant.

- If you take a folic acid supplement, it could protect your baby from neural tube defects.

- It could also help to protect your baby from problems such as spina bifida. Research shows that a B vitamin called folic acid can greatly reduce the chance of a baby being born with neural tube defects.

- Folic acid is very important during pregnancy. It helps your baby's spine to develop properly. Folic acid is also important for the formation of brain and spinal cord. If you stop using contraception, and are planning a pregnancy, it is a good idea to build up your folic acid stores by taking a daily 400 microgram folic acid supplement.

- You could become pregnant, you need to take a folic acid supplement before you stop using contraception. This means you need to take a folic acid supplement from the time you stop using contraception until the twelfth week of pregnancy. 

- By following the advice in this leaflet, you can reduce the risk to your baby. If you suffer from epilepsy, should consult their doctor or pharmacist if you are already taking any epilepsy medicine. If you take a folic acid supplement, it could protect your baby from neural tube defects.

- It could also help to protect your baby from problems such as spina bifida. Research shows that a B vitamin called folic acid can greatly reduce the chance of a baby being born with neural tube defects.

- When you are pregnant, it is important to make sure you get enough folic acid. Folic acid stores in your body for a long time. It is possible that you might become pregnant before you realise that you are pregnant.

- For this reason, you could become pregnant, you need to take a folic acid supplement before you stop using contraception. This means you need to take a folic acid supplement from the time you stop using contraception until the twelfth week of pregnancy. 

- If you stop using contraception, and are planning a pregnancy, it is a good idea to be sure you have enough folic acid in your body at the moment you might need it. If you take a folic acid supplement, it could protect your baby from neural tube defects.

- It could also help to protect your baby from problems such as spina bifida. Research shows that a B vitamin called folic acid can greatly reduce the chance of a baby being born with neural tube defects.