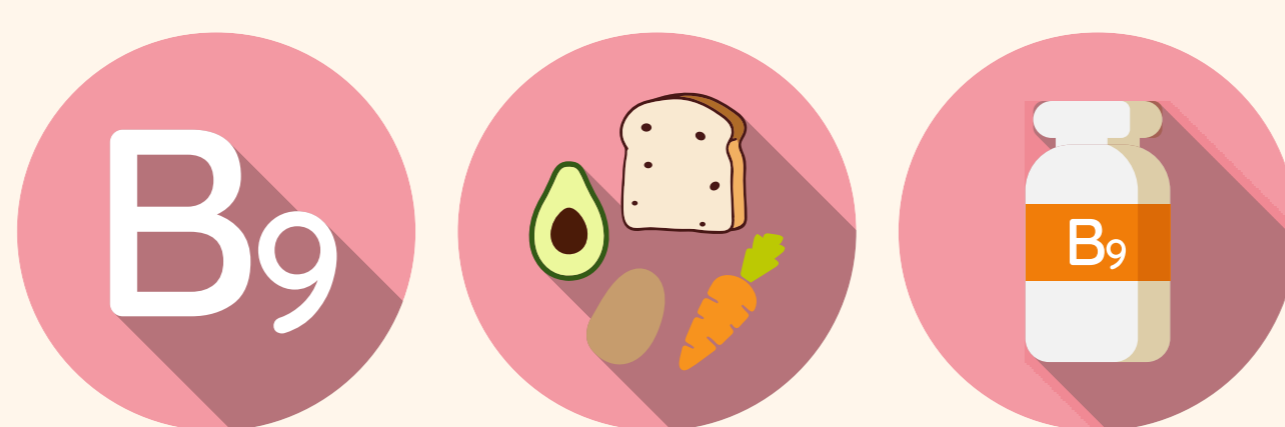


# Folic Acid, your Pregnancy Mate

- Consumption of a healthy balanced diet pre-pregnancy, during pregnancy and during lactation period is **crucial to guarantee your health and your newborn's health**. Adequate intake of vitamins and minerals will help in preventing birth defects, diseases and in developing a healthy baby. In fact, **one of the most crucial vitamins during pregnancy is Folic Acid**.

## What is folic acid and why is it important for pregnant women?

- Folic acid is an essential vitamin for our body since **it helps in making healthy red blood cells**. It is the version of the vitamin B9(folate) made in our bodies.<sup>1</sup> **Everyone needs folic acid but it is a crucial pre-pregnancy and pregnancy vitamin that needs to be taken by all women of childbearing age.**<sup>2</sup> It will help in planning for a healthy pregnancy because it helps in preventing major brain and spine birth defects in babies known as neural tube defects (NTDs).



## When should I start taking folic acid?

- The risk of having birth defects of the brain and spine can happen in the first weeks of pregnancy. **To prevent these defects, it is better to be prepared in advance and start taking folic acid before you start planning on getting pregnant.** In fact, unintended pregnancies can happen and starting to take folic acid today has no harm but in contrary it will help in building stores in your body because **by the time you realize you are pregnant it might be too late to prevent these birth defects.**<sup>3</sup>

## How much folic acid do I need to take and how do I get it?

- The recommended **daily amount** for woman of childbearing age is 400mcg/day.<sup>2</sup> And **there are 3 different ways in which you can get your folic acid needs:**



1) The easiest way is **taking a vitamin with 400mcg of folic acid**. If pills bother your stomach, try taking them with **meals or just before sleeping**.



2) Eating a **diet rich in folic acid**. Folic acid is found in:<sup>3</sup>

- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Oranges and orange juice
- Asparagus and broccoli
- Dark leafy green vegetables such as spinach and mustard greens



3) Eating foods fortified with folic acid such as **breads, pastas, rice, cereals and cereal bars, corn chips and tortillas**. Check the nutrition label on food packaging to see if the product contains folic acid and how much it contains per serving. A serving of **30g** from some cereals may contain between **20-30%** of your daily folic acid needs.<sup>3</sup>



- It might be difficult to reach the recommended daily intakes only from food sources therefore **vitamin supplements will be recommended**. Make sure to have the right amount of folic acid either from **food sources or vitamin supplements or both**, keep in mind that there is no need in exceeding the recommended daily needs. **Always consult with your doctor for any concern or sign and symptom you feel.**

## REFERENCES

1- Folic acid: vitamin that helps the body make healthy red blood cells - NHS ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))

2- Women Need 400 mcg of Folic Acid Every Day | CDC

3- Folic Acid Helps Prevent Some Birth Defects | CDC