

NUTRITION SECTION

Folic Acid/Neural Tube Defect Prevention

What is the purpose?

- To provide women of reproductive age with information about how to reduce the risk of a pregnancy affected by a neural tube defect (NTD).
- To link families who experience an infant with a neural tube defect with community resources to assist them.
- To provide information for reducing the risk of recurrence in future pregnancies.

What does the program do?

Educates health care professionals and the general public, especially women of reproductive age, about reducing the risk of NTDs by consuming 400 micrograms of synthetic folic acid daily prior to becoming pregnant for women without a history of NTDs and 4000 micrograms of synthetic folic acid for women who have experienced a neural tube defect pregnancy.

How many people are helped by the program?

Risk reduction information targets all women of reproductive age. An estimated 100 pregnant women each year discover they are carrying a child with a neural tube defect, many of which can be prevented by daily consumption of a folic acid-containing multivitamin pill or cereal enriched with 400 micrograms of folic acid per serving. Epidemiologic studies demonstrate that folic acid, when taken in adequate amounts periconceptionally, can prevent 50-70 percent of neural tube defects.

Why is the program important?

Preventable birth defects and a lifetime of disability continue to affect an unacceptably high number of women and children in Georgia. The rate of neural tube defects rate in Georgia for 2002 is estimated to be 5.3 per 10,000 live births. Results from the 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey show the following for the number of Georgia women taking a multi-vitamin containing 400mcg of folic acid:

- 18-24 years of age 37%
- 25-34 years of age 48%
- 35-44 years of age 54%

Neural tube defects occur approximately 3-4 weeks after conception, before most women realize they are pregnant. It is important to consume 400 mcg of folic acid daily to reduce the risk of neural tube defects.

Who is targeted?

All women in Georgia of reproductive age.

Outcome measures:

- Decrease the current number of pregnancies affected by neural tube defects.
- Increase the percentage of Georgia women who consume 400 mcg of synthetic folic acid daily.
- Reduce the incidence of neural tube defect recurrence.

Government Recommendations:

U.S. Public Health Service Recommendation (Sept. 1992), FDA Folic Acid Enrichment Final regulation – Federal Register, March 5, 1996 (61 FR 8750), Institute of Medicine (IOM) Recommendation (1998)

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<http://health.state.ga.us/programs/nutrition/folicacid/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/>

<http://www.sph.emory.edu/gafolic/>

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