



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

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NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, Jan. 5, 2009

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Colorado Women Encouraged to Take Folic Acid Daily Before Becoming Pregnant to Prevent Birth Defects

DENVER-During National Folic Acid Awareness Week Jan. 5-11, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Folic Acid Task Force and the National Council on Folic Acid are encouraging women of childbearing age to take a daily multivitamin and to eat foods rich in folate before becoming pregnant to prevent birth defects in their newborns.

Research has shown that if adequate amounts of folic acid are consumed before pregnancy, up to 50 to 70 percent of neural tube defects such as spina bifida can be prevented.

The U.S. Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid by taking a multivitamin daily and eating fortified grains. Fortified grains include enriched cereals, pasta, rice, bread, dried beans and peas. Peanut butter and orange juice also are good sources of folic acid.

April Montgomery, chair of the Colorado Folic Acid Task Force, said, "Considering that half of all pregnancies are unplanned, it is especially important that all women of childbearing age take folic acid daily, even before thinking of becoming pregnant."

She added that Hispanic babies are nearly two times more likely than others in the United States to be born with a neural tube defect. "Compared to other ethnic or racial groups, Latinas in the United States and in Colorado are least likely to consume the recommended amount of folic acid daily. We need to educate all women, especially Latinas, that folic acid can help prevent birth defects."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the incidence of neural tube defects has decreased by 26 percent since fortification of folic acid in grain products began in 1998.

For more information about folic acid, visit the National Council on Folic Acid's Web site, www.folicacidinfo.org, or call 303-692-2700.

About the Colorado Folic Acid Task Force

Initiated in 1998, the Colorado Folic Acid Task Force is a partnership created to increase folic acid consumption among women of childbearing age. Task force members include staff from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the Colorado chapter of the March of Dimes, the Spina Bifida Association of Colorado, Mountain States Genetics Regional Collaborative Center and community health centers around the state.

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