

What is folate?

Folate is the common group name for folic acid and other similar compounds found in food. Folate can also be added to foods through fortification. Folate works with vitamin B12, one of the B vitamins. Your body uses folate in the following ways:

- To form red blood cells, which help carry oxygen around your body.
- To help your nerves to function.
- To help form DNA, making sure cells replicate correctly.

Why is folate important in pregnancy?

There are many sources of folate in the diet. Pregnant women need extra folate to help the baby grow.

Risks of folate deficiency to an unborn baby include

- **Neural Tube Defects:** These are problems with the formation of the spine. Incomplete closure of the spinal cord and spinal column cause a range of birth defects known as "Spina bifida"
- Under-development of the brain.
- Incorrect formation of the skull.

Advice for pregnant women:

Pregnant women need to have folate supplements and a healthy diet. You need more folic acid to keep you healthy and help the baby's development.

From 1 month before conception to 12 weeks into your pregnancy, you should take 500µg of supplemental folic acid per day.



Best sources of folate

Fruit and vegetables



Spinach, cooked (1/2 cup)
130µg



Asparagus, cooked (1 cup)
240µg



Broccoli, cooked (1 cup)
165µg



Wombok (Chinese cabbage) raw (1 cup)
70µg



Cabbage, raw (1 cup)
30µg



Banana (1)
25µg



Melon (1/4 medium)
25µg



Fresh orange juice (1 cup)
24 - 75µg

Wholegrains



Fortified breakfast cereal, Bread
100 - 670µg



Enriched spaghetti, cooked (1 cup)
170µg

Pulses/legumes



Lentils, boiled (100g)
20µg



Black-eyed peas, boiled (1 cup)
358µg



Beans, various types, boiled (100g)
24-140µg

Other sources



Vegemite (per 5g serve)
100µg



Egg yolk (1)
25µg



Malt drink bases (eg. Milo, Ovaltine, per 100mL of prepared drink)
5 - 106µg

How much folate do I need?

Age		RDI (µg/day)
Infants	0-6 months	65*
	7-12 months	80*
Children and Adolescents (male and female)	1-3 years	150
	4-8 years	200
	9-13 years	300
	14-18 years	400
Adults (male and female)	19+ years	400
	Pregnant	600
	Lactating	500

*Adequate intake (ADI) is used for infants
µg =micrograms

Example of folate for a day

		Folate (µg)
Breakfast	1 cup fortified bran flakes with 1 cup milk	400
	1 cup orange juice	75
	2 slices wholegrain toast with 5g Vegemite	50
		100
Lunch	1 cup baked beans	260
	2 slices wholegrain toast	50
	1 banana	25
Dinner	Spaghetti Bolognese made with 1 cup enriched spaghetti	165
	1 cup cooked broccoli	165
	¼ medium melon	25
Total dietary folate (µg)		1315

µg =micrograms



Don't forget to take a 500µg folate supplement once a day if planning or during early pregnancy

References: Mahan, L. & Escott-Stump, S. (Ed. 12, 2008) Krause's Food & Nutrition Therapy. Saunders Elsevier; NHMRC - Nutrient Reference Values, 2014 Government of Western Australia, Department of Health 2017 health.wa.gov.au

Medical, midwifery, and dietitian appointments are available at WHFS.

See our website for nutrition workshops being held this term.

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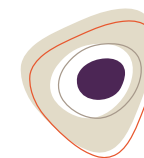


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Folate and pregnancy



womens health
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