



## The North Carolina Folic Acid Campaign

The North Carolina Folic Acid Campaign's mission is to improve health by promoting the benefits and consumption of folic acid. The goals of this campaign are to:

- Reduce the number of neural tube birth defects.
- Increase women's awareness of the role folic acid has in preventing birth defects.
- Increase the number of women of childbearing age who take a multivitamin daily that contains folic acid.

Folic acid is important because it can reduce the risk of a neural tube birth defect by up to 70% when the woman takes it daily before getting pregnant. A woman who waits until she is pregnant has waited too late because the neural tube is fully formed by the 28<sup>th</sup> day of pregnancy and 50% of pregnancies are unplanned.

Folic acid is the synthetic form of folate, which is an essential nutrient formed naturally in food and part of the B-complex vitamins. A daily vitamin with folic acid is recommended because it is extremely difficult to get adequate folate or folic acid in the foods we eat. Food sources include: fortified breakfast cereals, lentils, black beans, pinto beans, red beans, kidney beans, chicken & beef liver, asparagus, spinach, romaine lettuce, lima beans, avocados, broccoli, brussels sprouts, collard and turnip greens, enriched pasta and bread, oranges and orange juice, peanuts and sunflower seeds.

North Carolina is in a region of the country with one of the highest rates of neural tube birth defects. Birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States.

It is important for child care staff and administrators to know the importance of folic acid and to encourage diets rich in folic acid and the use of multivitamins. A large number of child care providers are females of childbearing age and many of the parents of the children they serve are also of child bearing age.

Child care facilities can help this campaign to be successful by:

- Providing free materials to parents
- Displaying posters in common areas
- Including information about folic acid in agency newsletters
- Volunteering to become a community ambassador

To get free materials and more information go to [www.getfolic.com](http://www.getfolic.com) or [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com). Materials are also available in Spanish. The Latino Campaign coordinator is Leslie LeRosset, 919-781-2481 or [ldeerosset@marchofdimes.com](mailto:ldeerosset@marchofdimes.com)

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APP PER 8/08