



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Transylvania County
Department of Public Health

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

Jessica Nolan, Public Information Officer
Transylvania County Department of Public Health
98 East Morgan Street Suite 170
Brevard, NC 28712
(828) 884-3135 ext 241
(828) 884-3140 (fax)
jessica.nolan@transylvaniacounty.org

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Folic Acid Awareness Week (January 8th – 14th) is an excellent time to remind men and women of the important role folic acid plays in our bodies each day. Folic acid is a B vitamin that our bodies use to make new cells. Specifically for women, folic acid is very important because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine (anencephaly and spina bifida) by 50% to 70%. For folic acid to help prevent some major birth defects, a woman needs to start taking it at least one month before she becomes pregnant and while she is pregnant. Every woman needs folic acid every day, whether she's planning to get pregnant or not, for the healthy new cells the body makes daily, such as the skin, hair and nails.

There are two easy ways to be sure you are getting enough folic acid each day. The first is simple – taking a vitamin that has folic acid in it every day. This could be in the form of a multivitamin that contains folic acid or a supplement that has only folic acid in it. Most multivitamins sold in the United States have the amount of folic acid women need each day and can be found at most local pharmacy, grocery, or discount stores. Check the label to be sure it contains 100% of the daily value (DV) of folic acid, which is 400 micrograms (mcg). Another way to ensure you are getting the optimal daily amount of folic acid is to eat a bowl of breakfast cereal that has been fortified with folic acid and therefore contains 100% of the daily value of folic acid. Not every cereal has this amount, so be sure to check the Nutrition Facts Label and look for “100%” beside *folic acid*.

Important growth of the baby happens very early in pregnancy, before most women know that they are pregnant. If a woman has enough folic acid in her body **before and during pregnancy**, it can help prevent major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine. During this week and throughout the year, be sure to remember and share with others the importance of **women getting 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day**.

Transylvania County Department of Public Health has teamed up with Mission Hospital through their Preconception Health Campaign to provide a multivitamin containing folic acid to any woman of childbearing age (13-48) free of cost. Please contact Transylvania County Department of Public Health at (828) 884-3135 to learn more about this opportunity.