



**Take Your Multivitamin Every Day!**  
It's an expression of love for yourself.

## Folic Acid Awareness Week

January 4-10 is Folic Acid Awareness Week and a great time to start taking a multivitamin with 400 mcg of the B- vitamin folic acid every day. So, whether or not you're planning to have a baby this year, you can start the New Year with habits that will help give a baby a healthy start in life. Folic acid is an important way to reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain or spine called neural tube defects (NTD) by up to 70 percent.<sup>1</sup> NTDs occur in the first 28 days of fetal development, often before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

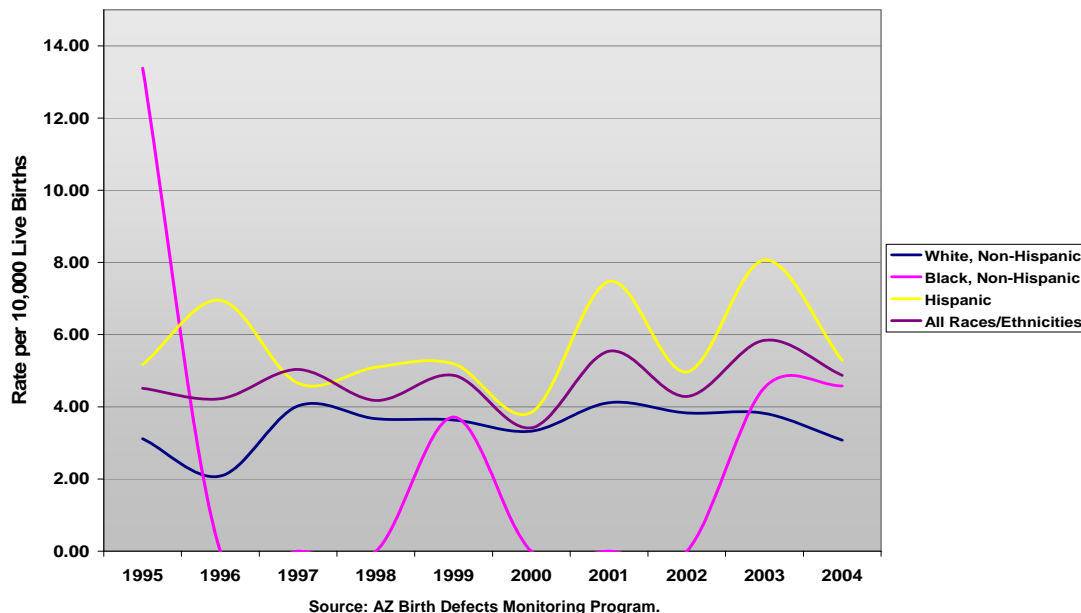
### What is folic acid and why do you need it?

Folic acid is an essential B vitamin; therefore, everyone needs it in order to stay in good health. Folic acid helps build DNA and your body uses it for cell growth and reproduction, fundamental building block processing and genetic material production. Folic acid is water soluble; therefore, it passes through your body very quickly.<sup>2</sup>

Although all enriched cereals and grain products in the U.S. are fortified with the B-vitamin folic acid, only one-third of U.S. women of childbearing age consume the recommended amount.<sup>1</sup> Taking a multivitamin with folic acid every day is a key way that women can get the recommended amount of 400 mcg.

Women especially need folic acid, even if not planning to become pregnant, since 50% of all pregnancies are unplanned. Taking folic acid before pregnancy can reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain and spine such as spina bifida and anencephaly by up to 70%.<sup>1,2</sup>

Figure 1. Rate of Spina Bifida per 10,000 Live Births by Selected Race/Ethnicity



On average, 52 babies per year are born with neural tube defects (NTDs) in Arizona.<sup>3</sup> According to the Arizona Department of Health Services Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs, during 2007, there were 533 children under age 21 enrolled in the Children's Rehabilitative Services (CRS) program being treated for spina bifida.

The rates of Arizona's race and ethnicity groups show disparities in the incidence of spina bifida. Hispanic women are more likely to give birth to a baby affected by spina bifida than women of all races and ethnicities (Figure 1). In the U.S., Hispanic babies are 1.5 to 2 times more likely than others to be born with a neural tube defect (NTD).<sup>4</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports Latinas in the U.S. consume the least amount of folic acid and have the least knowledge about folic acid among racial or ethnic groups in this country.<sup>1</sup> Given the disparities in rates, Arizona's Hispanic population can benefit most significantly from efforts to promote folic acid.

Health care professionals can order educational materials to educate patients year-round from:

<http://www.takemultivitamins.com/Free.pdf> or

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

To learn more about neural tube defects and benefits of folic acid, visit [www.getfolic.org](http://www.getfolic.org) or call 1-800-252-5942.

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing neural tube birth defects: a prevention model and resource guide, 2009. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/freematerials.html>

<sup>3</sup> Arizona Department of Health Services, Birth Defects Monitoring Program, 1995-2004.

<sup>4</sup> Canfield MA, Honein MA, Yuskiv N, Mai CT, Collins JS, Devine O, et al. National estimates and race/ethnic-specific variation of selection birth defects in the United States, 1999-2001. *Birth Defects Res A*. 2006; 76:747-56.