



Folic Acid and Birth Defects of the Brain and Spine

Protect your loved ones and choose folic acid fortified corn masa products

Supporting Healthier Communities



What are neural tube birth defects?

Neural tube defects (NTDs) are severe birth defects of the brain and spine, such as spina bifida and anencephaly, which can result in severe disability, miscarriage, or infant death.



What is folic acid (vitamin B9)?

Folic acid is a man-made form of vitamin B9, which is necessary for cell growth and neural development. Folic acid is included in all enriched cereal grain products such as fortified wheat flour.



Does everyone need folic acid?

The CDC states that everyone needs vitamin B9 daily to make new cells. Folic acid is especially important for healthy development and growth during pregnancy.¹



How does folic acid help prevent NTDs?

Getting enough folic acid before and during the first 28 days of pregnancy can prevent up to 70% of neural tube defects.² CDC recommends that everyone capable of becoming pregnant get 400 mcg of folic acid daily.



Who is most affected?

Hispanic/Latina women are 19% more likely to have a child born with an NTD than non-Hispanic White and Black women.³



Why fortify corn masa products?

Adding vitamins and minerals to foods is called fortification. Fortifying foods helps people meet their daily vitamin needs, and is proven to help prevent NTDs.

How to find fortified foods

Read Labels

- Check both the ingredient list and nutrition facts, as folic acid might be listed in either section.

Look for Specific Phrases

Look for phrases like:

- **"contains folic acid"**
- **"enriched/fortified with folic acid"**
- **"tiene/contiene ácido fólico"**
- **"enriquecida con ácido fólico"**

Fortification Symbols

Check for fortification symbols:



What you can do

- Purchase products with folic acid.
- Inform friends and family: share the benefits of folic acid-fortified products and explain how consuming these products can help prevent neural tube defects and support healthier pregnancies.

References:

(1) CDC. [Micronutrient Facts](#). (2024). (2) Prevention of neural tube defects: results of the Medical Research Council Vitamin Study, (1991). (3) [Stallings et al.](#) (2024).

