



Health Benefits of Folic Acid Fortification

A Public Health Win for Everyone

Mandatory folic acid fortification has long been recognized for its effectiveness in reducing neural tube defects. A significant body of evidence suggests that the benefits of folic acid fortification extend far beyond pregnancy outcomes. By fortifying commonly consumed foods with this essential B vitamin, public health policies have helped improve health, especially in populations vulnerable to nutrient deficiencies.

Beyond Neural Tube Defect Prevention: Additional Health Benefits of Folic Acid Fortification



Lowers Homocysteine for Better Heart Health

Elevated homocysteine levels in the blood are linked to increased risk of cardiovascular diseases such as stroke and heart attack. Foods fortified with folic acid contribute to lower homocysteine concentrations, offering a protective effect for heart health.¹



Prevents Folate-Deficiency Anemia

Folate is essential for red blood cell formation. Its deficiency can lead to anemia, resulting in fatigue and poor oxygen transport throughout the body. Fortification has played a vital role in reducing this condition.²



Prevents Megaloblastic Anemia

Folic acid fortification has been effective in decreasing the risk of megaloblastic anemia (anemia characterized by very large red blood cells and a decrease in the number of those cells) during pregnancy.³



Lowers Risk of Several Types of Birth Defects

Folic acid fortification contributes to a reduced risk of babies being born with cleft palate⁴ and heart, upper limb, kidney, and abdominal wall defects.⁵



Prevents Cancer

Folic acid fortification has been linked to a decrease in the incidence of some childhood cancers (pancreatic cancer and kidney cancer).⁶

By the Numbers

- At least **70** countries require foods to be fortified with folic acid (B9).⁷
- The US was the first country to require food to be fortified with folic acid in **1996**.⁸
- **No conclusive adverse effects** have been documented from mandatory folic acid fortification.⁹

References

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