



Folic Acid Fortification Is Safe: A Summary

A Public Health Win for Everyone

Fortifying Food with Folic Acid Is Safe

There is considerable evidence that fortifying food with folic acid is safe for everyone.¹

Does not mask vitamin B12 deficiency



- Folate and vitamin B12 deficiencies independently cause megaloblastic anemia, a condition in which the red blood cells are larger than normal.²
- If fortification with folic acid masks vitamin B12 deficiency, the prevalence of people with vitamin B12 deficiency but no anemia should increase after fortification starts.
- On the contrary, studies have shown that the prevalence of individuals with vitamin B12 deficiency but no anemia did not change between the pre- and post-fortification periods, confirming that folic acid fortification does not mask vitamin B12 deficiency.^{3,4}

Does not increase risk of adenoma



- Adenomas are benign tumors that can develop into cancer.
- Evidence from several countries where food is fortified shows that after folic acid consumption, free folic acid appears in the blood.⁵⁻¹⁰
- A 2017 study, which followed individuals for six years (average age of 58 at the start of the study), found no association between free folic acid in the blood and risk of developing adenomas.¹¹

Does not cause cancer or increase deaths from cancer



- A study including men and women found that the downward trend in the incidence rate of colorectal cancer continued after mandatory grain fortification with folic acid, suggesting no relationship between folic acid fortification and colorectal cancer incidence.¹²
- Similarly, a study among men and women found a downward trend in deaths from colorectal cancer, suggesting that folic acid fortification does not increase deaths from colorectal cancer.¹³
- A 2014 study using data from >200,000 individuals found no effect of high dietary folate intake on prostate cancer risk.¹⁴

Folic Acid Fortification Facts

- **No conclusive adverse effects** have been documented from mandatory folic acid fortification.¹
- Mandatory folic acid fortification is a **proven strategy to prevent** birth defects, anemia, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases.¹⁵
- At least **70** countries require foods to be fortified with folic acid.¹⁶
- The US and Oman were the first countries to require food to be fortified with folic acid in **1996**.¹⁷

References

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