

## Folic Acid Supplements Are Dangerous (For Pregnant Women and the Rest of Us)

Naturally occurring folate, which is a water-soluble B vitamin (as found in leafy greens), is an important part of a healthy diet. Folate deficiency has been linked to osteoporosis, Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, heart attack, stroke, ulcers, macrocytic anemia, and other illnesses. Additionally, folate is critical for fetal development, and as such is especially important for pregnant women. Folate aids in neural tube development, and can prevent severe birth defects of the spinal cord and brain.



Clearly, it's important to get adequate amounts of folate in the diet, but folic acid, which is the supplement form found in many fortified foods, and in multi-vitamins and prenatal vitamins, is an entirely different beast. A Norwegian study published last month found that heart-disease patients whose diets included folic acid fortification and supplementation were 43% more likely to die of cancer (1). Another study found that while whole-food folate consumption was not associated with any increased risks, folic acid supplementation increased breast cancer risk by 32% (2). Equally alarming is the study that found that folic acid supplementation by pregnant women increases the risk of childhood asthma by 26% (3). Still other studies have linked folic acid supplementation to prostate and colorectal cancers.

For many years I have urged readers to avoid supplements that are isolated forms of vitamins. Whole-foods and whole-food based supplements are the only places to get the nutrients and antioxidants that our bodies so desperately need. The top 5 folate-containing green vegetables are literally loaded with this vital nutrient. They are: raw spinach, romaine lettuce, cooked asparagus, raw mustard greens, and raw collard greens. Salads and **green drinks** are an excellent part of any diet, and I recommend that everyone have at least 2 servings of dark green

vegetables per day. And more is even better.

I myself never took any prenatal vitamins when pregnant with either of my daughters, and both were extremely healthy at birth (and remain so to this day).

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