

Protect the Health of Your Unborn Child

Today and everyday children in the United States will be born with a devastating neural tube defect. The neural tube forms within the first month of pregnancy and develops into the baby's spine. The most common neural tube defect is spina bifida. This occurs when part of the baby's spinal cord and backbone does not develop properly. As a result, the baby may have paralyzed legs and develop bladder and bowel problems. Another more severe neural tube defect is anencephaly. In these cases, part of a baby's skull and brain are missing. These babies die shortly after birth.

Folic acid is a B-vitamin that can help to prevent neural tube defects. Because half of the pregnancies in the United States are unplanned and because the neural tube has already formed by the time most women realize that they are pregnant, all women of childbearing age (ages 15 to 45) should take 400 micrograms of **folic acid** on a daily basis even if they are not planning a family now.

To get enough **folic acid** daily, a woman can take a vitamin pill containing **folic acid**, eat a breakfast cereal fortified with 100 percent of the daily value or eat foods fortified with **folic acid** and rich in folate. **Folic acid** is found in enriched breads, breakfast cereals, grains, and beans. Foods that contain folic acid are leafy, dark green vegetables such as spinach and broccoli and orange juice from concentrate.

The Waushara County Health Department, working with the Healthy Babies Coalition, is starting a local campaign to prevent neural tube defects from happening to unborn children.

For any further information, please contact Waushara County Health Department at (920)787-6590. Simple preventive steps can prevent devastating consequences later.