# Folic Acid for the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects

## Clinical Summary of U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Women planning a pregnancy or capable of becoming pregnant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation</strong></td>
<td>Take a daily vitamin supplement containing 0.4 to 0.8 mg (400 to 800 μg) of folic acid.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade: A</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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### Risk Assessment

- A personal or family history of a pregnancy affected by a neural tube defect (NTD)
- The use of certain antiseizure medications
- Mutations in folate-related enzymes
- Maternal diabetes
- Maternal obesity

**Note:** This recommendation does not apply to women who have had a prior pregnancy affected by neural tube defects, or women taking certain anti-seizure medicines. These women may be advised to take higher doses of folic acid.

### Timing of Medication

- Start supplementation at least 1 month before conception.
- Continue through first 2 to 3 months of pregnancy.

### Recommendations of Others

ACOG, AAFP, and most other organizations recommend 4 mg per day for women with a history of a pregnancy affected by a neural tube defect.

For a summary of the evidence systematically reviewed in making these recommendations, the full recommendation statement, and supporting documents please go to [http://www.preventiveservices.ahrq.gov](http://www.preventiveservices.ahrq.gov).


This summary was first published in Annals of Internal Medicine in May 2009. (Ann Intern Med 2009;150:629; [http://www.annals.org](http://www.annals.org)).

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