

USPSTF recommends folic acid supplement before, during pregnancy

August 1 2023, by Elana Gotkine



The U.S Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends folic

acid supplementation for people planning to or who could become pregnant. These recommendations form the basis of a final recommendation statement published in the Aug. 1 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.

Meera Viswanathan, Ph.D., from RTI International-University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Evidence-based Practice Center, and colleagues conducted a systematic review of the new evidence on the benefits and harms of [folic acid](#) supplementation for prevention of [neural tube defects](#). Data were included from 12 [observational studies](#) reported in 13 publications, with 1,244,072 participants.

The researchers found that one cohort study reported a significantly reduced risk for neural tube defects associated with folic acid supplementation taken before, during, and before and during [pregnancy](#) (adjusted relative risks, 0.54, 0.62, and 0.49, respectively); this association was seen in the later of two study periods (2006 to 2013 but not 1999 to 2005). No other significant benefits were reported. There were no reports of significant harms associated with pregnancy-related folic acid exposure.

Based on these findings, the USPSTF concludes there is a high certainty that folic acid supplementation has a substantial net benefit for preventing neural tube defects in offspring. Consequently, the USPSTF recommends a daily supplement containing 0.4 to 0.8 mg of folic acid for all persons planning to or who could become pregnant (A recommendation).

"The Task Force continues to underscore the importance of taking a daily supplement containing folic acid before and during early pregnancy to help protect the health of babies," [task force](#) member Katrina Donahue, M.D., M.P.H., said in a statement.

More information: Meera Viswanathan et al, Folic Acid Supplementation to Prevent Neural Tube Defects: Updated Evidence Report and Systematic Review for the US Preventive Services Task Force, *JAMA* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2023.9864](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.9864)

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David B. Nelson et al, Reaffirming Recommendations for Folic Acid Supplementation, *JAMA* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2023.12972](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.12972)

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