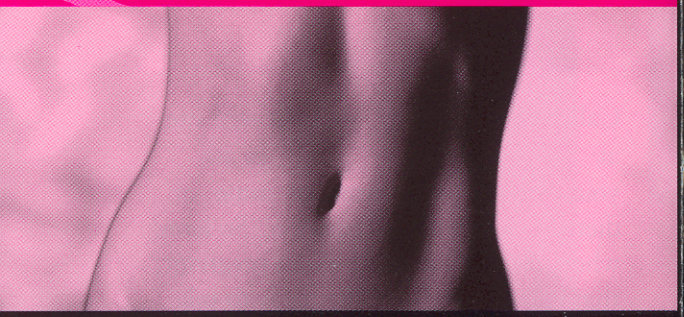
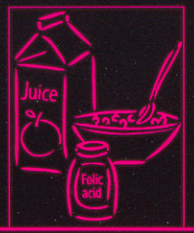
ready



but your body's been preparing for years.



Folic Acid Now

So your body's ready when you are.

You may not be ready to have a baby,

not

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES · USA

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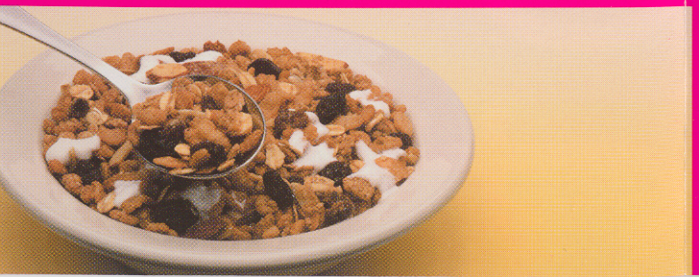
So what if your body's ready to have a baby? That doesn't mean *you're* ready! You have lots to do before motherhood. But one day you may be ready. And that's why you need to take folic acid today.

The U.S. Public Health Service recommends that all women who could possibly become pregnant get 400 micrograms (or 0.4 mg) of folic acid every day. This could prevent up to 70% of some types of serious birth defects. But to do this, women need folic acid **before** they get pregnant. That's why you should always get enough folic acid every day even if you're not thinking about a baby any time soon.

Why Folic Acid Is So Important

Folic acid is a B vitamin that can be found in some enriched foods and vitamin pills. If women have enough of it in their bodies, this vitamin can help prevent birth defects of the baby's brain or spine. Spina bifida, a birth defect of the spine, can cause paralysis of the lower body with no control of bowel or bladder, and learning disabilities. Another type of birth defect affects the brain and causes babies to die within a few days.



But many of these birth defects can be prevented if women get enough folic acid every day. Folic acid can help form a baby's brain and spine properly. Getting enough folic acid takes a small effort. But it makes a big difference.

Eat Right...

Most of us get some folic acid in our diet every day. Folic acid has been added to some foods such as enriched breads, pastas, rice and cereals. Check the labels on your breakfast cereals. A few have 100% of the folic acid you need. A well-balanced diet with fruits and vegetables is always important. You can get your folic acid through food alone, but it takes careful planning to make sure you get enough every day.

...And Take A Vitamin

For many women, an easy way to be sure you're getting enough folic acid is to take a vitamin with folic acid in it. Almost every multivitamin has all the folic acid you need. If you get an upset stomach from multivitamins, try taking them with meals or just before bed. You can also buy vitamin pills made with folic acid alone — they are small and easy to swallow.

Even If You're Not Planning To Have A Baby Yet

No one expects an unplanned pregnancy. But it happens — every day. In fact, about *half* of all pregnancies are not planned. That's why you should get enough folic acid every day if there's any chance you could get pregnant. Because by the time you realize you're pregnant, your baby's brain and spine are already formed.

For More Information

Call 1-888-232-6789, visit our web site at www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid, or ask your own doctor, pharmacist, nurse, or dietitian for more information. So later, when *all* of you is ready to get pregnant, that baby of yours will be ready to take on the world.

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