

Folic Acid Update

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

Winter 2005

Dear Folic Acid Advocates,

This edition of Folic Acid Update includes all of the usual updates along with a special reminder about Birth Defects Prevention Month (January) and the new National Folic Acid Awareness Week, January 24–30, 2005.

We welcome your comments and input. If you have any exciting folic acid activities planned, we would love to highlight them in an upcoming issue! Please contact us at Flo@cdc.gov.

Happy New Year!



National Folic Acid Awareness Week, January 24–30, 2005

As many of you know, January is Birth Defects Prevention Month. This year also marks the first National Folic Acid Awareness Week, scheduled for January 24–30, 2005. The National Council on Folic Acid (NCFA) has been working to prepare for the week. Some of the week's activities are highlighted below.

National Folic Acid Awareness week will begin with a media briefing on January 24, 2005, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. Speakers include Anita Boles, Chair of NCFA, and Dr. José Cordero, Director, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We have also asked Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard to speak.

On January 26, 2005, the Alabama Department of Health (ADPH), the Birth Defects Surveillance and Prevention Program of the University of South Alabama, and members of the Alabama Folic Acid Council will host a national educational teleconference about folic acid's ability to prevent serious birth defects. To register, visit the ADPH website at <http://www.adph.org/alphnt/vcomm.asp?action=conflistone&templatnbr=3&deptid=143&templateid=1252>.

For more information about National Folic Acid Awareness Week, and to order promotional materials including brochures, bookmarks, and posters, go to <http://www.folicacidinfo.org/campaign/>.

Texas Spotlight

County Clerks Participate in Folic Acid Education Effort



Nearly 170,000 marriage licenses are issued each year in Texas to couples with a bride under age 45—and each of those couples must go to their county clerk’s office to obtain their license. That’s why, in May 2004, the Texas Folic Acid Council mailed 254 packets of folic acid information to county clerks throughout the state. These packets, funded in part by the March of Dimes, included examples of educational materials that are available for free from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), order forms for these materials, and reminders printed on sticky notes and pens to order additional materials.

Because couples might be more likely to think about their potential for childbearing when they are preparing to marry, they could be considered contemplators (individuals who are considering having a baby in the next year or so) rather than pre-contemplators (individuals who have no plans for having a baby soon), making them much more open to a lifestyle change such as taking folic acid. Thus, the message about folic acid and the prevention of birth defects will find a “fertile” ground in this initiative.

As of October 2004, 42 county clerks had ordered the CDC materials—a response rate of 16%. The Texas Folic Acid Council greatly appreciates the participation of the Texas Department of State Health Services’ Vital Statistics Unit and each county worker who participates in the campaign.

For more information about this campaign, please contact Amy Case, Program Specialist, Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance, at 512-458-7232 or amy.case@dshs.state.tx.us.

The materials mentioned in this article can be ordered from CDC at no charge by visiting <http://www2.cdc.gov/ncbddd/faorder/orderform.htm>.

Folic Acid Lesson Plans

Looking for New Folic Acid Lesson Plans?

Outstanding science teachers who participated in CDC’s Science Ambassador program have developed and published four public health lesson plans on folic acid and prevention of neural tube defects. Each lesson plan meets National Science Education Standards and has been reviewed for scientific and educational accuracy and approved by CDC scientists and the staff of Georgia Department of Education’s Georgia Learning Connections. Nineteen lesson plans have been published since 2003, and an additional 8 should be available by February 2005. Among other lesson plan topics are genetics and the prevention of fetal alcohol syndrome.



Lesson plans can be found on the Science Ambassador website at:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/ambassador_pgm/lessonplans.htm

About the Science Ambassador Program

The Science Ambassador program at CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) began in 2003 because of CDC's interest in having public health issues taught in the science classroom. The program introduces students to public health and helps them understand its many facets early in their education. During 2003, the program was open to Georgia middle and high school science teachers; in 2004, it became a national program, involving science teachers from around the country.

Plans are underway for the 2005 Science Ambassador program, scheduled for June 13–18, 2005. Look for an announcement on the website soon. This year's program will include some exciting new components, so if you know any outstanding science teachers, please let them know about this program.

For more about the program and how to apply, please go to <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/ScienceAmbassador.htm>.



Tennessee Folic Acid Council

CMEs for Health Care Providers

The Tennessee Folic Acid Council (TFAC) has created a CD-based educational program for health care providers that offers continuing education credits. The CD has been sent to more than 5,800 physicians throughout the state. Recently, the educational program was developed into a web-based project co-sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Health and the March of Dimes, Tennessee Chapter. It provides one free Continuing Medical Education unit (CME) from Vanderbilt for physicians, physician assistants, osteopaths, and midwives or nurses who can use CMEs. It is also good for one Continuing Professional Education (CPE) unit for dietitians. For more information, visit the Tennessee Folic Acid Council website at <http://www2.state.tn.us/health/MCH/FolicAcid/ce.htm>.

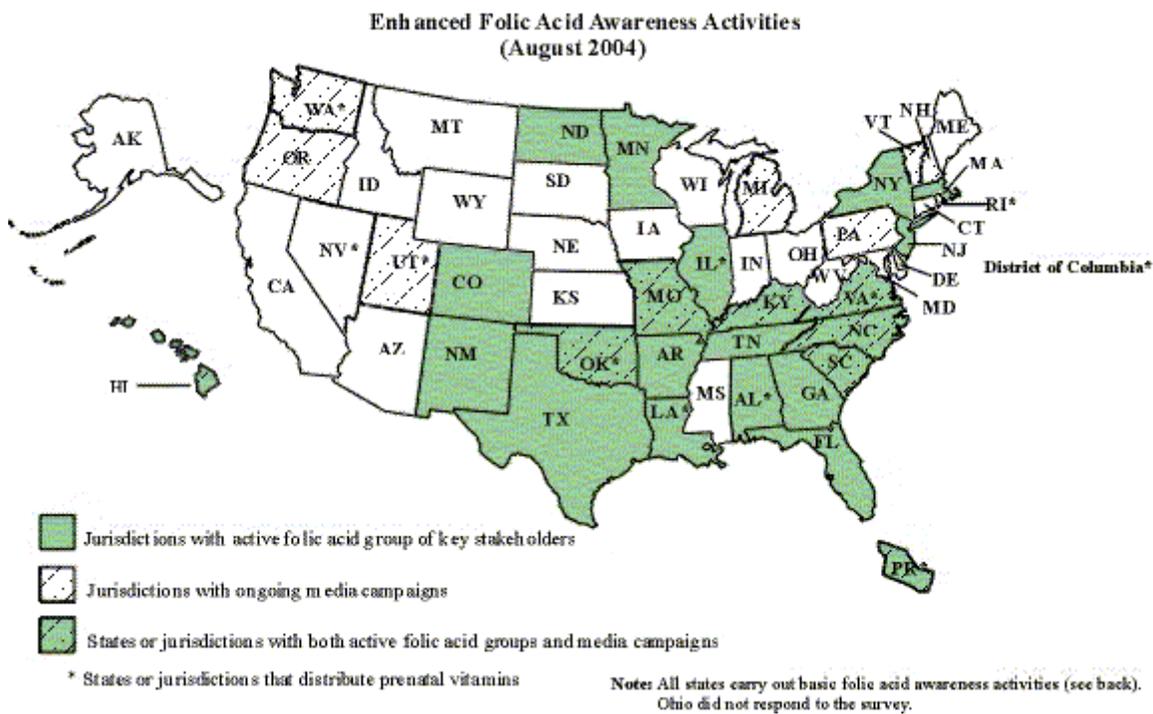
Can You Help?

The Tennessee Council is trying to identify an organization that would be willing to provide free CEUs for nurses for this offering. If your organization has the capacity to provide CEUs, please contact Pearl Hann at the March of Dimes at 615-399-3200 or phann@marchofdimes.com, to determine the feasibility of partnering in this program.

Policy

Folic Acid Postcard

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and CDC created a Folic Acid Postcard that highlights folic acid activities across the nation. NCSL is sending these cards to health legislators and their staffs to inform policy makers about folic acid activities. To develop the postcards, NCSL asked each state about its folic acid activities. Activities were placed into the categories shown on the map below. This graphic interpretation of the information was placed on the front of the postcard, with general folic acid and neural tube defect information on the back. To view the full postcard, visit the NCSL website at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/folicacid.htm>.



New Folic Acid Material....Coming Soon

Fact Card for Adolescents

The Prevention Research Team at CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities is currently working with middle schools in the Atlanta metro area to test a draft of a new folic acid brochure with students in grades 5 through 8. The team hopes to finish testing by early March and plans to make this new material available through CDC's order form for free folic acid materials by September 2005. To learn more about the brochure or the development and testing process, please contact Katie Kilker at kpk9@cdc.gov.

Calendar of Events



January 2005

National Council on Folic Acid

National Folic Acid Awareness Week

January 24–30, 2005

<http://www.folicacidinfo.org/campaign/>

National Birth Defects Prevention Network 2005 Annual Meeting

January 24–26, 2005

Scottsdale, AZ

<http://nbdpn.org/NBDPN/annualmeeting4.html>

February 2005

American College of Nurse Practitioners 2005 National Nurse Practitioners Summit

February 4–7, 2004

Washington, DC

<http://www.nurse.org/acnp/summit>

American College of Preventive Medicine February 16–20, 2005

Washington, DC

<http://www.preventivemedicine2005.org/>

Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs

February 19–23, 2005

Washington, DC

<http://www.amchp.org/news/2005conference/conference-general.htm>

March 2005

American Medical Student Association AMSA's 55th Convention: A New Professionalism: Physicians Worthy of the Public Trust

March 16–20, 2005

Arlington, VA

<http://www.amsa.org/conv/>

American College of Medical Genetics March 17–20, 2005

Dallas, TX

<http://www.acmg.net/resources/ACGM/2005/2005-main.asp>

New Published Research:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Use of vitamins containing folic acid among women of childbearing age—United States, 2004. *MMWR* 2004;53:847–50.
 - March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation. *Folic Acid and the Prevention of Birth Defects: A national survey of pre-pregnancy awareness and behavior among women of childbearing age 1995–2004*. White Plains (NY): The Foundation; 2004.
 - Periz-Castrillon JL, Arranz-Pena ML, Luis DD. Homocysteine as a predictive factor for hip fracture in older persons. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2004;2:351–61.
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