

CDC's Second Nutrition Report

Folic acid fortification: A sustained public health success



Background

It is especially important for people to have enough folate in their bodies during pregnancy, infancy, and other periods when cells rapidly divide and grow. To reduce the risk of neural tube defects in newborns, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires folic acid be added to all enriched cereal grain products.

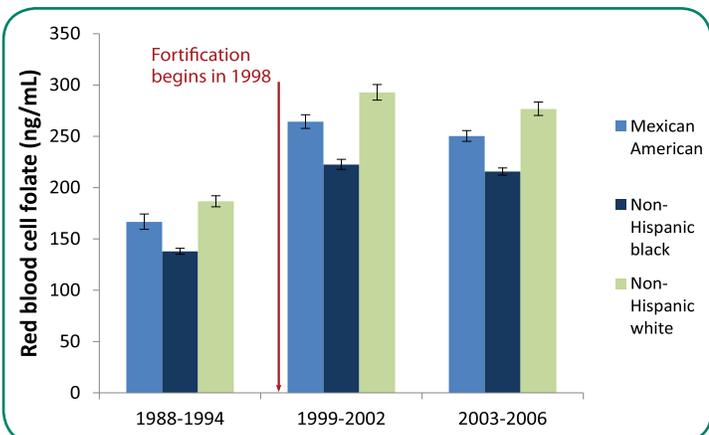
Red blood cell folate is indicative of body folate stores and a good indicator of long-term folate status.

Intake recommendations

Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that every woman who could become pregnant consume at least 400 micrograms of folic acid each day in addition to food forms of folate from a varied diet.



Pre- and post-fortification blood folate levels by race/ethnicity

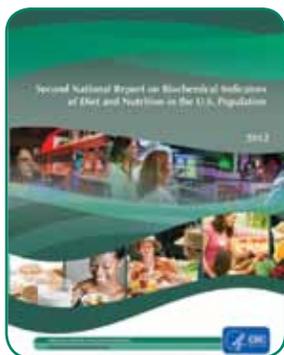


SOURCE: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 1988-2006

Other report findings

- Of all age groups, people 60 years and older had the highest blood folate levels.
- Females had higher blood folate levels than males.
- Non-Hispanic whites had higher blood folate levels than non-Hispanic blacks and Mexican Americans.

After 1998, blood folate levels showed increases of about 50% across race/ethnic groups. Before fortification, about 10-12% of women of childbearing age did not have enough folate. After fortification, folate deficiency dropped to less than 1% in women of childbearing age of all race/ethnic groups and in the U.S. population.



The *Second Nutrition Report* (www.cdc.gov/nutritionreport) provides:

- Rates of nutrient deficiencies
- Reference information for physicians and scientists to detect high or low nutrient levels in people
- A look at nutrient levels over time to detect trends of health significance
- An evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions to improve the nutrition status of the U.S. population
- The nutrition status of specific populations for nutrient deficiencies

Additional information about folate is available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/index.html>

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