

# Vitamin B9 Folate (Folic Acid)

This yellow B vitamin is the most commonly deficient vitamin in New Zealand, especially among infants and women (Maori women in particular).

Excess alcohol, smoking, aspirin, and the pill are known to hinder the absorption of Folate.

Folate is required for cell division and is especially important for the health of pregnant women and their babies. Their need almost doubles during pregnancy and deficiencies have been strongly linked with pregnancy problems such as toxæmia. These problems can result in miscarriage, mental retardation, Spina Bifida and malformities of the child, especially cleft palate.

Low levels are also found in heart attack victims and arthritics.

A recent large study, reported in 1999 found that adequate Folate reduces the incidence of bowel cancer a massive 75%.

So strong is the evidence of health problems linked with lack of Folate that American health authorities require white flour to be fortified with this vitamin. This has proved successful in reducing deficiencies.

Lack of Folate during times of severe anxiety has been linked with premature greying of hair. Interestingly a large amount of Folate can restore abnormally grey hair on an animal to its natural hue, but it does not seem to work with humans.

Folate is similar in action to B12 and appears to be equally important for mental health. Low levels are commonly found in alcoholics, retarded children, depressed persons, psychiatric patients, and those suffering from senility or Alzheimer's disease.

Many schizophrenics respond to a combined treatment of Folate, Niacin and Zinc. Epileptics have been found to improve on Folate and B12 supplements.

It is believed that our body can manufacture small amounts of Folate but most must be supplied from our food.

## **Role in our body**

- Helps our body absorb and utilise protein.
- Assists in the forming of body and blood cells.
- Necessary for healthy development of a foetus during pregnancy.
- Assists in maintaining normal brain function.

- Assists in maintaining clear arteries.
- Helps maintain the health of our eyes, hair and skin.
- Helps maintain health of our digestive system.
- Helps control uric acid levels.

## **Too little**

- Toxaemia, premature birth or miscarriage in pregnant women.
- Malformed and retarded infants if mother deficient.
- Irritability. Depression. Mental disorders. Alcohol and drug addiction. Senility. Alzheimer's disease.
- Weak red blood cells, pale skin, low energy (anaemia).
- Clogged arteries. Heart Attack.
- Cold hands and feet.
- Sore smooth red tongue. Stomach ulcers.
- Weak vision in elderly.
- Attention disorders in children.
- Premature grey hair.
- Arthritis. Gout.
- Bowel cancer. Irritable bowel syndrome.
- Lung cancer in heavy smokers (factor).

## **Too much (over 400 mcg daily)**

- Nausea. Wind. Insomnia. Zinc excretion.

## **Cooking losses**

High – usually around 50% if cooked at high temperatures.

## **CARTOON**

Pregnant woman pushing shopping cart

*The need for Folate **almost** doubles during pregnancy – oranges are a good source.*

# Vitamin B9 Folate

		RDI	
Infants	150 mcg	Children	250 mcg
Men	400 mcg		
Women	400 mcg	Pregnancy and breast feeding	600 mcg

		mcg	
<b>DAIRY / EGGS</b>			
2 med	Eggs	40	
2 cups	Milk - (std or low-fat)	25	
<b>FRUITS</b>			
1 cup	Honeydew	100	
½	Avocado	55	
1	Orange	50	
1 cup	Rock Melon	40	
1 cup	Orange Juice (pure)	20	
<b>GRAINS / NUTS</b>			
1 plate	Cornflakes (with milk)	85	
1/3 cup	Peanuts (roasted)	65	
4 slices	Bread - Wholemeal	40	
1/3 cup	Almond / Cashew nuts	40	
½ cup	Flour - Wholemeal	35	
4 slices	Bread - White	30	
2	Weetbix (with milk)	20	
<b>MEAT / FISH Cooked)</b>			
100 gms	Pipis	50	
<b>VEGETABLES (cooked)</b>			
1 cup	Broccoli	180	
1 cup	Brussels Sprouts	145	
½ cup	Spinach	120	
2 cobs	Sweet Corn	85	
¾ cup	Green Peas	75	
1 cup	Cauliflower	70	
4 slices	Beetroot	60	
¾ cup	Baked Beans	50	
1 med	Kumara	35	
1 med	Tomato (raw)	30	
½ cup	Green Beans	25	
2 med	Potatoes	25	
1	Onion	25	
½ cup	Coleslaw	20	
1 cup	Lettuce (raw)	20	
<b>HEALTH FOODS</b>			
100 gms	Liver	260	
1 tbsp	Brewers Yeast	190	
1 tsp	Marmite	100	
1 plate	Muesli (with milk)	95	
1	Muesli Bar	45	
2 tbsp	Wheat Germ	40	
1 cup	Soy Milk	25	

## HEALTH HINT

### A healthy pregnancy

The need for Folate almost doubles during pregnancy. This is best achieved with natural foods rather than supplements. Mothers-to-be should therefore eat plenty of green vegetables, yellow melons and oranges throughout their pregnancy.

Also a long walk most days minimises the common risks of varicose veins and constipation.

*“The best time to start feeding a baby is several years before it is born.”* Brenda Sampson. NZ allergy consultant & author.