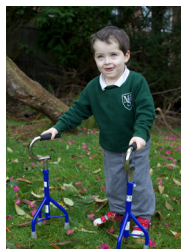


Sam (mum to Beth)

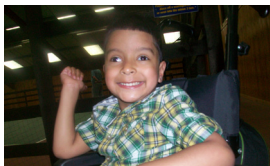
'I feel passionately that all women need to know about folic acid. Beth had major surgery to close the hole in her spine when she was only one day old. When she was two years old she got her first wheelchair.'

Eilish (mum to Michael)

'Michael's my third child and we found out at a scan after a triple test at 18 weeks that he had spina bifida. With all of my pregnancies my doctor only told me to take folic acid once I found out I was pregnant. I wasn't told about taking it beforehand.'

Anna (mum to Harry)

'We found out when I was 28 weeks pregnant that Harry had spina bifida. He was very poorly and nearly died four times. After Harry was born, my doctor made sure that I was taking the higher 5mg dose of folic acid before any future pregnancies.'

Haleema (mum to Toheed)

'I already had 2 young daughters when we found out at my 20 week scan that Toheed had spina bifida. I didn't know about folic acid. My English wasn't very good, so maybe I was told but didn't understand? It was a very stressful time and I cried a lot.'

folic acid. My English wasn't very good, so maybe I was told but didn't understand? It was a very stressful time and I cried a lot.'

For more information contact:

Go Folic!

Email: robin.barnatt@shinecharity.org.uk

Tel: 01733 421355

www.gofolic.co.uk

For more information about spina bifida, anencephaly, other NTDs and hydrocephalus contact:



42 Park Road, Peterborough, PE1 2UQ
info@shinecharity.org.uk

England/Northern Ireland - Tel: 01733 555988
 Wales - Tel: 01656 864102

www.shinecharity.org.uk

This leaflet has been produced
 with the kind support of



**Female?
 Having Sex?
 Then before you frolic**

Go Folic!



**It's never too soon to
 start ...**



Ready or not?

If you are having sex, there is a chance that you could get pregnant, even if you are trying not to! Doctors recommend that any woman who **might** get pregnant should take a daily vitamin tablet containing 400mcg of folic acid (vitamin B9).

Why?

Before you're even aware that you are pregnant, your baby's brain and spinal cord are developing. Folic acid is very important because it helps them to grow properly.

But it takes a while to get enough into your bloodstream. Taking folic acid for at least 3 months **before you conceive**, until the 12th week of your pregnancy will help to prevent Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) like spina bifida which happen in the first 28 days of pregnancy.

Don't wait until you're pregnant to start!

No one likes to think that anything will happen to their baby. But, every day, at least 2 unborn babies will develop a condition like spina bifida. That's about 900 every year in the UK.

But I'm not planning to have a baby ...

Then you're like 40% of the women that get pregnant in the UK every year! If you are having sex, there is always a chance that you could get pregnant ... So, Go Folic! ... Just in case!

What is folic acid?

Folic acid is a form of vitamin B9 which is also found naturally in food. It is needed to help make new cells and for growth, which is why it's so essential for making babies.

I eat a healthy diet, isn't that enough?

That's great to hear ... But **no**! All women are encouraged to eat a healthy balanced diet including foods containing folic acid during their pregnancy, but diet alone **won't** provide you with enough folic acid to protect your developing baby. You need a daily vitamin tablet too!



How much folic acid should I take?

Most women need to take a daily vitamin tablet containing 400mcg of folic acid (*sometimes written as 0.4mg or 400µg*). Check the label!

Some women have an increased risk of having a baby with an NTD and will need a higher, 5mg dose. It's important to speak to your GP if:

- Either you or your partner have spina bifida, or a family history of NTDs
- You have diabetes
- You are taking anti-epilepsy medication
- You have coeliac disease
- You are very overweight (i.e. you have a BMI over 30)

You can only get this higher 5mg dose on prescription from your GP.

What if I'm already pregnant?

You should start taking folic acid and continue doing so until the 12th week of your pregnancy. If you are more than 12 weeks pregnant and haven't taken folic acid, try not to worry – the chances of your baby being born with an NTD are still slim, but if you are at all concerned, talk to your doctor.

Important new information

Vitamin B12 helps folic acid to work better!

Taking a daily supplement that contains at least 2.5mcg of B12 with your main meal, in addition to folic acid, may help to further reduce the risk of NTD.