



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EMPHASIZES IMPORTANCE OF FOLIC ACID

~ Awareness Week shows benefits of multi-vitamins and daily foods~

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) encourages moms-to-be to take at least 400 micrograms of folic acid as a multi-vitamin and eat foods that contain the folic acid as part of National Folic Acid Awareness Week. Folic acid (also known as folate) is found in leafy green vegetables, citrus fruits, cereal and oatmeal. Taken daily, this B vitamin is recommended for women of child bearing age to prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord, also known as neural tube defects.

“Preserving the health and safety of Florida’s children begins before they are born,” said DOH’s Senior Epidemiologist Dr. Sharon Watkins. “Fifty to 70 percent of birth defects of the brain and spinal cord can be prevented if a woman has enough folic acid before conception and throughout the first trimester of her pregnancy.”

Folic acid is important for proper fetal growth and development. Neural tube defects are serious birth defects of the spine and brain that may occur early in pregnancy, often before a woman knows she is pregnant.

Data collected by the Florida Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) from 2004 through 2008 reveal that 77 percent of new mothers know that taking the vitamin folic acid can help prevent some birth defects, but only 27 percent of new mothers report taking a multivitamin containing folic acid every day before becoming pregnant.

For more information on folic acid and birth defects, please visit www.fbdr.org or www.folicacidnow.net.

DOH protects, promotes and improves the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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