

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



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Governor

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Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS BENEFITS OF FOLIC ACID IN BABY HEALTH

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health reminds women of child bearing age of the importance of folic acid to prevent certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

“Florida’s most precious resource is our children and we are committed to improving the health of babies,” said Dr. Celeste Philip, Deputy Secretary for Health and Deputy State Health Officer for Children’s Medical Services (CMS). “The Department encourages all women of child bearing age to consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily.”

About half of all pregnancies are unplanned, contributing to delayed entry into prenatal care. This delay presents a barrier to optimal pregnancy management, particularly during the crucial early weeks of embryonic development. Raising awareness of risk factors for birth defects, among both the public and the health care community, can help to reduce the occurrence of birth defects.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, women can increase their own chances of having a healthy baby through healthy lifestyle choices. Strategies to prevent birth defects include taking a multivitamin with folic acid daily to prevent serious defects, maintaining a healthy weight through regular physical activity and consumption of nutritious foods, having regular checkups, avoiding alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy and minimizing unnecessary medication exposure in pregnancy.

The Florida Birth Defects Registry (FBDR) is a statewide population-based surveillance system that identifies children born with birth defects with the goals of identifying risk factors, investigating community concerns, promoting collaboration to prevent birth defects and reducing associated bad health outcomes. The FBDR is Florida’s source for population-based information on birth defects including data on prevalence rates, trends and risk factors.

For more information about folic acid, birth defects surveillance and prevention in Florida, please visit the Department’s web site at www.fbdr.org or www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/index.html and select *Birth Defects*.

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