

FOLIC ACID

FOLATE

Folic acid is the synthetic form of a vitamin that was originally identified in green, leafy vegetables: folate (lat. *folium* for leaf). Foliates, which occur naturally in food, are essential for humans. A factsheet.

Why do we need folic acid/folate?

The body converts folic acid and folates into the active form tetrahydrofolate. This is how folate becomes biologically active in many metabolic processes, especially in the synthesis of DNA. Thereby it is also important for cell division and growth.

LAMB'S LETTUCE

146

DEEP-FROZEN GREEN PEAS, COOKED

78

STRAWBERRIES

44

OAT FLAKES

87

LEAF SPINACH, COOKED

105

THIS MUCH FOLATE CAN BE FOUND IN ...

in micrograms (μg) per 100 grams (g)

143

CAMEMBERT

COW'S MILK

9

26

BROCCOLI, STEAMED

22

ORANGE

34

RYE WHOLEMEAL/RYE AND WHEAT BREAD

58

HEN'S EGG, BOILED



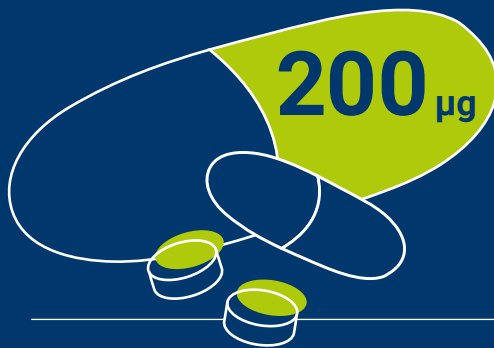
Other folate sources: tomatoes, nuts and seeds.

Foliates are water-soluble and sensitive to light and heat. Therefore, prepare foods carefully.

With a balanced diet made up of plenty of green vegetables, pulses and wholemeal products, healthy people do not need vitamin pills or special fortified foods to meet their folate requirements. Food supplements can help if an insufficient folate supply has been detected. However, they should not contain more than 200 µg of folic acid per daily dose. Folic acid intakes of more than 1,000 µg per day increase the risk of adverse health effects, such as the masking of symptoms of a vitamin B12 deficiency.

Maximum level recommended by the BfR

per daily dose of a food supplement:



There are numerous foods fortified with folic acid: examples in Germany include table salt, soft drinks, breakfast cereals and dairy products.



How much folate (in folate equivalents*)? per day

300 µg

ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS

550 µg

PREGNANT WOMEN

450 µg

BREASTFEEDING WOMEN

Women planning to have children and those in their first trimester of pregnancy should take a supplement containing 400 µg folic acid per day in addition to consuming 550 µg of food folates via their diet. This reduces the risk of birth defects in the child (for example, neural tube defects such as *spina bifida*).

* Folic acid and folates are absorbed and metabolised differently by the body. The amounts of folic acid and folate are specified as folate equivalents to account for different bioavailability.



More information



BfR FAQ
"Folate and folic acid"