



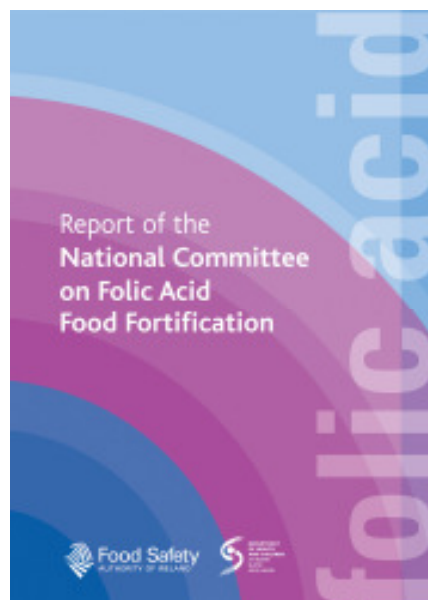
Mandatory Folic Acid Food Fortification in Ireland: a background to the decision

Dr Mary A.T. Flynn

11th January 2007



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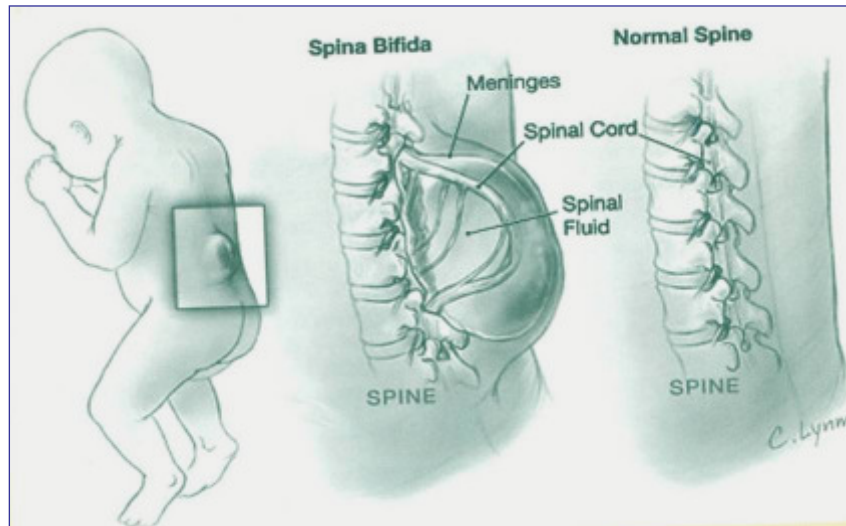
Summary

- Why add folic acid to bread in Ireland?
- Details of main recommendations



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NTDs - failure of normal closure of embryonal neural tube



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Ireland has one of the highest rates of Neural Tube Defects

Between 49 and 93 babies are born with NTDs every year in Ireland



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Women in Ireland who may become pregnant are advised...

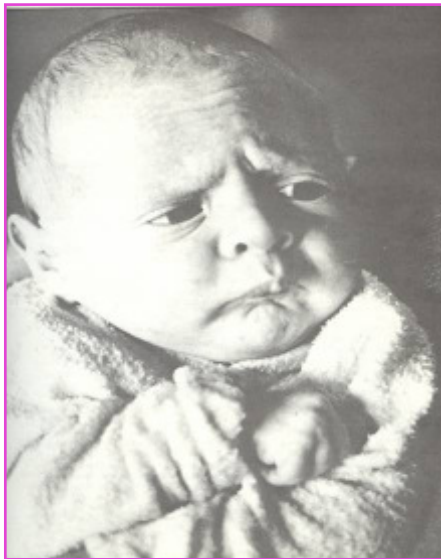
'take 400ug folic acid every day'

...but very few women take folic acid as recommended



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Timeframe for preventing NTDs



Neural Tube closes 28 days after conception....

....just when most women are *beginning to suspect they might be pregnant!*



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Rates of NTDs in Ireland and other countries



% NTD affected pregnancies resulting in a live birth

81% (*Dublin*)

11% (*London*)

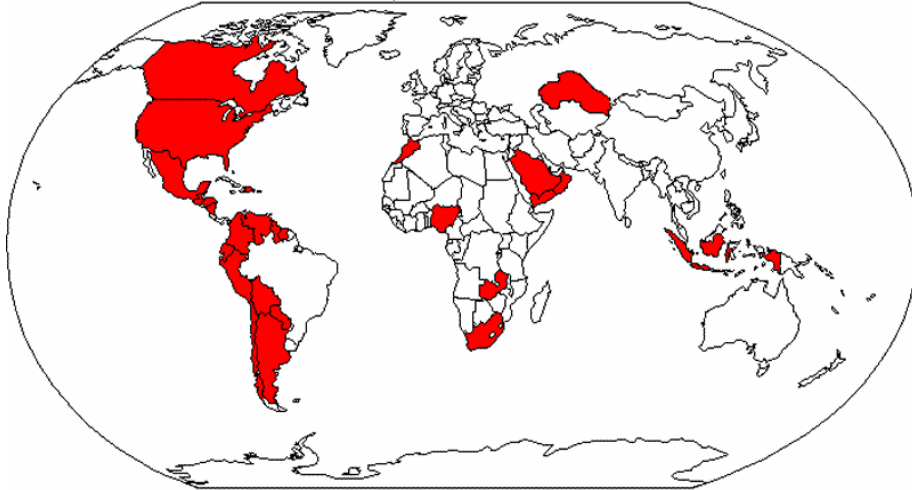
9% (*Paris*)

Burden of disease is much higher in Ireland



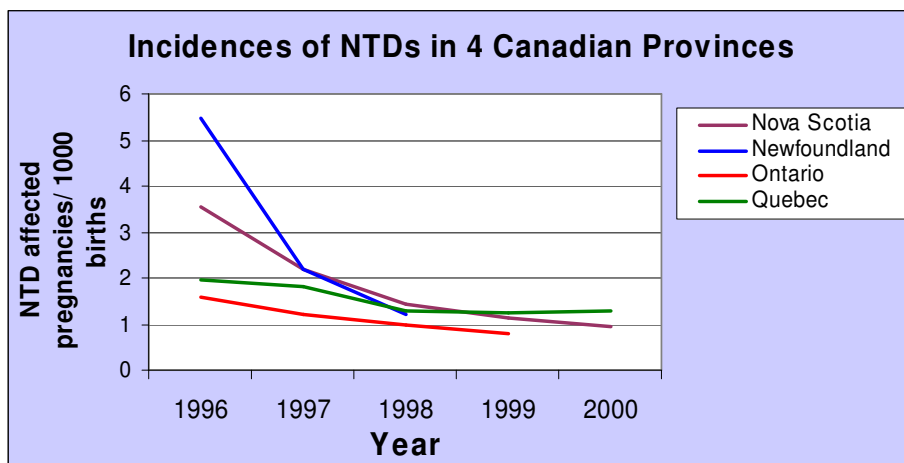
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42 countries have mandatory folic acid food fortification programmes



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Incidence of NTDs in four Canadian Provinces after mandatory folic acid food fortification was implemented



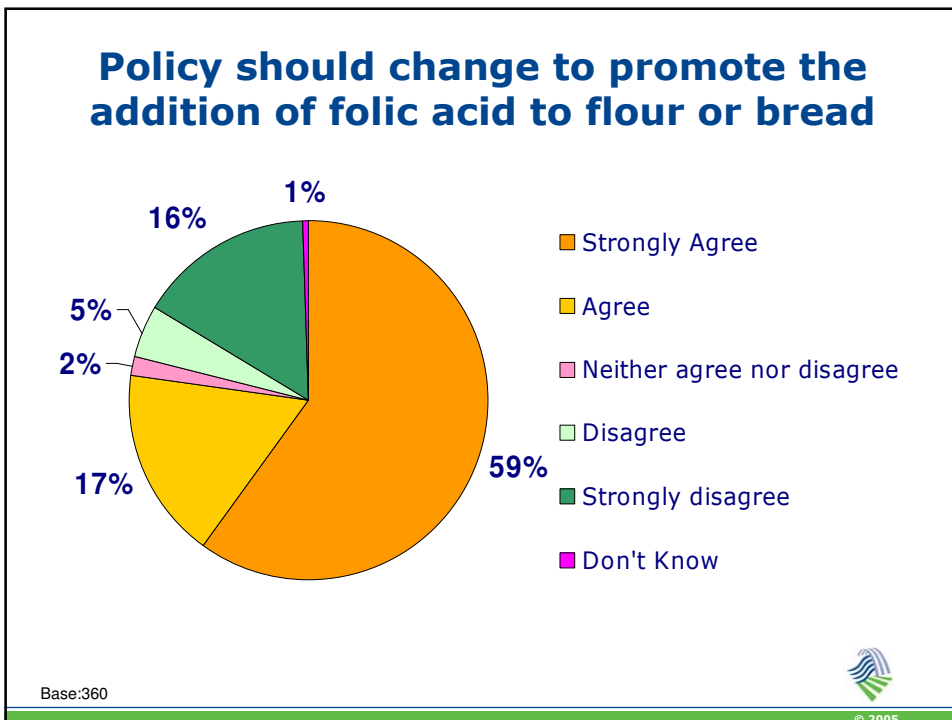
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Public consultation on folic acid food fortification in Ireland



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Recommendations

Some important aspects



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Most breads (including wholemeal)
will be fortified
(120µg folic acid / 100g bread)



Women will be provided with
25% of their folic acid needs

NTDs will be reduced by **24%**
(higher protective effects where folate status is low)



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Most breads (including wholemeal)
will be fortified
(120µg folic acid / 100g bread)



Folate deficiency will be eradicated
This will benefit older adults in particular
↓homocysteine levels
(possible modest reduction in cardiovascular disease)



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Women who are sexually active
need to continue
to take folic acid supplements

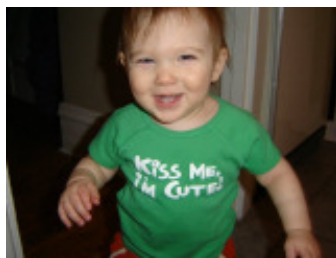


Folic acid food fortification ***will not***
fully protect pregnancies against NTDs

**Promotion of folic acid
supplement use must continue**



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