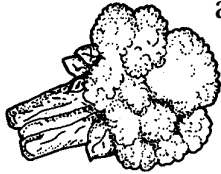


# Folic Acid

**What is folic acid?** Folic acid is a cell-building B vitamin also known as folacin or folate.

**Why is folic acid important?** When taken before pregnancy and in the early weeks of pregnancy, folic acid can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord called neural tube defects (NTDs). Folic



acid also plays an important role in the production of normal red blood cells. It may prevent heart disease, stroke, colon cancer, and cleft palate.

**What is neural tube defect?** NTD is a birth defect of the brain and spinal cord. Anencephaly and spina bifida are the two most common NTDs. A baby born with anencephaly will die because of a severely underdeveloped brain and skull. Spina bifida occurs when the lower end of the neural tube fails to close, resulting in the possibility of paralysis of the legs and loss of bowel and bladder control.

**How much folic acid do I need?** The U.S. Public Health Service recommends that that all women who could become pregnant get 400 micrograms (0.4mg) of folic acid every day. It is estimated that this could prevent up to 70 percent of neural tube defects.



**Where is folic acid found?** Natural folic acid (also known as folate) is found in orange juice; leafy green vegetables like spinach; broccoli; and pinto, navy, and kidney beans. Fortified breakfast cereals and enriched bread, crackers, rice, pasta, cornmeal, and flour contain the manmade form of



folic acid. Your body can absorb almost all of the synthetic form of folic acid found in supplements and fortified foods.

FOOD	SERVING SIZE	FOLATE
chicken liver .....	3½ oz .....	770 mcg
beef liver, fried .....	3 oz .....	187 mcg
40% bran flakes .....	1 cup .....	165 mcg
pinto beans, cooked from dry .....	½ cup .....	147 mcg
kidney beans, cooked from dry .....	½ cup .....	114 mcg
orange juice .....	1 cup .....	109 mcg
cornflakes .....	1¼ cup .....	99 mcg
collards, cooked from frozen.....	½ cup .....	64 mcg
peanuts, dry roasted .....	¼ cup .....	53 mcg
cantaloupe .....	1 cup .....	52 mcg
corn, canned.....	½ cup .....	51 mcg
broccoli, cooked from fresh .....	½ cup .....	39 mcg
lettuce, iceberg .....	1 cup .....	31 mcg
green beans, canned.....	½ cup .....	21 mcg
yogurt, fruited, low-fat .....	8 oz .....	21 mcg

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# Recipes

## Bean and Garlic Dip

**2 cups canned cooked pinto beans**  
**1 clove garlic, finely chopped**  
**1/4 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing (low-fat)**  
**1 tsp. red chile peppers, ground**  
**dash of pepper**

Mash the beans. Mix all ingredients. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour. Serve with tortilla chips. You can substitute 1 tsp. chile powder or a dash of hot sauce for the chilies. Makes 18 servings.

Nutritional values: calories 29, protein 1 g, carbohydrate 5 g, fiber 1.3 g, fat 0.4 g, Vitamin C 0.4 mg, folate 16 mcg, calcium 12 mg, sodium 110 mg.

## Layered Taco Dip

**1 pound lean ground beef**    **16 oz. tomato sauce**  
**1 onion, chopped**         **1 pkg. Taco seasoning**  
**1 green pepper, chopped**    **1/4 tsp. chili powder**  
**16 oz. refried beans**

Brown meat, onions and pepper; drain. Add other ingredients and simmer about 10 minutes. Spread into a pie pan and chill.

### *Toppings:*

**12 oz. sour cream, low-fat**  
**1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese**  
**1/2 cup lettuce, chopped**  
**1 tomato, diced**

Spread on sour cream and garnish with other toppings. Serve cold with tortilla chip. Other toppings might include olives, onions, and avocados. Makes 12 servings.

Nutritional values: calories 177, protein 14 g, carbohydrates 17 g, fiber 3 g, fat 6 g, Vitamin C 20 mg, folate 17 mcg, calcium 96 mg, sodium 500 mg.

## Orange Julia

**3/4 cup low-fat, sugar-free vanilla yogurt**  
**1/2 cup frozen orange juice concentrate**  
**1 cup clear sugar-free soda**  
**1/2 banana**

Mix together in a blender. You can also mash the banana with a fork and mix together with a mixer. Makes 3 small servings. (Frozen yogurt could be used instead of regular yogurt to make a punch.)

Nutritional values: calories 146, protein 4 g, carbohydrates 5 g, fiber 0.8 g, fat 1 g, Vitamin C 68 mg, folate 84 mcg, calcium 31 mg, sodium 48 mg.

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## References

*"Folic Acid Now: Before You Know You're Pregnant"* and *"Folic Acid Now,"* Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Available: [www.cdc.gov/nceh/folicacid](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/folicacid).

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