

Now you can reduce the risk of neural tube defects by taking a folic acid tablet daily.

- **What is folic acid?**

Folic acid is a B vitamin, which should be taken daily by all women of reproductive age.

- **Why should I take folic acid daily?**

You should take folic acid daily because it can reduce your risk of giving birth to a child with a neural tube defect for the first time and you could also reduce the recurrence of such a defect in a subsequent child. Folic acid has also been shown to be beneficial in the prevention of ischaemic heart disease.

- **What are neural tube defects?**

Absence of the skull and brain (Anencephaly) and open spinal cord (Spina bifida) are the commonest neural tube defects. They are present at birth.

- **What are the sources of folic acid available to me?**

Folic acid is found in green leafy vegetables, dhal, green gram, lemons, oranges, and liver. But it is destroyed at the time of cooking. So you cannot get enough folic acid from your diet alone. Therefore, you must take a folic acid tablet or a multivitamin tablet daily. Two tablets of the special iron-folate tablet, which is given in maternal clinics in government hospitals also, provide you with your daily requirement of folic acid.

- **When should I take folic acid?**

Your baby needs folic acid most during the first three months of the pregnancy. During this time you may not be aware that you are pregnant. So, it is advisable for all women of reproductive age to take one tablet of folic acid daily as a routine.

If you have given birth to a child with a neural tube defect, then in addition to taking folic acid tablets, it is advisable for you to seek genetic counselling.

- **Who can give me more advice and genetic counselling?**

Your family doctor, who knows you and your family, is the best person to advise you and to provide you with genetic counselling. If you do not have a family doctor you can contact any other doctor or our Unit.

**HUMAN GENETICS UNIT  
GENETIC AWARENESS PROGRAMME  
(GAP)**

Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo,  
Kynsey Road, Colombo 8.  
Telephone/Fax 0112 689545  
Website: <http://www.hgucolombo.org>  
email: [office@hgucolombo.org](mailto:office@hgucolombo.org)



***TAKE***

**Folic Acid Daily**

***AVOID***

**Birth Defects**

***HAVE***

**Healthy Babies**

Facts YOU Should Know

