



Council for Responsible Nutrition®

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National
Healthy Mothers,
Healthy Babies
Coalition

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BRIDES-TO-BE SHOULD SAY “I DO” TO A DAILY MULTIVITAMIN WITH FOLIC ACID

Washington, D.C., *December 29, 2008* – “For richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health,” are some of the most common words heard in wedding vows. But what is often overlooked is the health of the married couple’s future children. With National Folic Acid Awareness Month taking place January 5 through 11, 2009, brides-to-be should start thinking about saying “I do” to taking a daily multivitamin with 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid daily—to protect their own health and the health of their children-to-be.

Folate is a water-soluble B vitamin that occurs naturally in foods, such as leafy green vegetables, whereas folic acid is the synthetic form of folate that is found in supplements and added to fortified foods. This essential B-vitamin helps build and maintain healthy cells, which is especially critical for the developing fetus. Studies have shown that if taken before and during early pregnancy, folic acid can significantly reduce the number of birth defects of the brain and spine called neural tube defects (NTDs) by up to 70 percent.

Despite the food fortification program that began in 1998, which enriched breads, cereals, flours, corn meals, pastas, rice, and other grain products with folic acid, the average non-pregnant Caucasian woman gets only 128 mcg per day of folic acid from fortified food, according to a study published in the May 2007 issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*—African American and Hispanic women get even less folic acid in their daily diet.

"There are nearly 60 million women in the U.S. who are of childbearing age," says Elizabeth T. Jordan, DNSc, RNC, a perinatal clinical nurse specialist and member of the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition Board of Directors. "We know that nearly half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned and that the average woman is getting less than one-third of the recommended amount of folic

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acid. We also know that the odds of having a baby born with an NTD could be greatly reduced by women of childbearing age getting the recommended amount of folic acid." The easiest way to reduce the risk of having a baby born with an NTD is for women to begin taking a multivitamin with 400 mcg of folic acid today—not after they become pregnant, says Dr. Jordan.

According to the recent Healthcare Professionals (HCP) Impact Study, conducted by the [“Life...supplemented”](#) consumer wellness campaign, almost three quarters of physicians (72 percent) and more than three quarters of nurses (88 percent) say it is a good idea for patients to take a multivitamin—many of which contain 400 mcg of folic acid. According to the same survey, 86 percent of nurses and 87 percent of physicians personally take a multivitamin.

“Evidence suggests that the incidence of neural tube defects could be decreased as much as 70 percent if all women had an adequate folate intake during the periconceptual period," says Dr. Jordan.

“The neural tube begins to close within the first month of gestation, often before a woman realizes she is pregnant.”

To help remind brides-to-be of the importance of taking a daily multivitamin with folic acid, two organizations, the Council for Responsible Nutrition and the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition, have teamed up to develop a series of free e-postcards that can be sent to brides-to-be, reminding them to take care of their health. To wish a bride-to-be a lifetime of happiness and health, visit

www.crnusa.org/commitment or www.hmhb.org.

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The Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), founded in 1973, is a Washington, D.C.-based trade association representing dietary supplement industry ingredient suppliers and manufacturers. CRN members voluntarily adhere to a code of ethics and manufacture dietary supplements to high quality standards under good manufacturing practices.

The National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB) is the only coalition of its kind which acts as a catalyst for change by creating partnerships among community groups, nonprofit organizations, professional associations, businesses and government agencies. The Coalition promotes optimal health for mothers and babies, and works to strengthen families and build healthy communities.