

*Folic acid and risk of chronic disease*

Folic Acid, a B vitamin, is found in spinach and turnip greens, dried beans and peas, avocados, bananas, oranges, asparagus, enriched breads, cereals, flours, and other grains. This vitamin is essential (meaning that it must be consumed in food or supplements) as it is needed for the creation and maintenance of new cells. In addition to reducing the risk of birth defects, research shows that folic acid supplementation may also protect against breast and colon cancer, reduce the toxic side effects of methotrexate (a drug used to treat a variety of illnesses including rheumatoid arthritis and asthma), and possibly lower the risk of heart disease and stroke. Although folic acid is generally regarded as safe, the use of folic acid supplements for protection against chronic disease is not recommended unless an individual is advised to do so by a physician; however, consumption of a diet high in natural sources of folic acid could reduce one's risk.

*Adapted from:*

Zeller JL, Burke JE, Glass RM. JAMA patient page. Folic Acid. *JAMA*. 2006; 296 (22): 2758.