Consider taking a multivitamin or a single pill with 400 micrograms of folic acid.

REMEMBER: In the United States, over one-half of all pregnancies are unplanned. Many factors, including a healthy diet overall, are involved in having a healthy baby. Folic acid is one of many nutrients needed in a healthy diet for women who can become pregnant.

A well-balanced diet that includes folate-rich foods, along with other nutrients, will help a baby off to a healthy start.

How much is enough? How much is “too much”?

Adults should limit total folic acid intake to 1000 micrograms per day to be safe, unless under medical advice.

To get more folate in your diet:

- top your favorite cereal with slices of fruit, like strawberries
- add broccoli or cauliflower to stir-fry
- toss some fresh spinach into salads
- use berries, watermelon cubes, pineapple wedges and orange sections for a colorful fruit salad
What is folate?
Folate, or folic acid as it is found in dietary supplements and fortified foods, is a B vitamin. It is found:
- in foods that are fortified or enriched;
- naturally, in some foods;
- in over-the-counter vitamin supplements.

Who needs folic acid?

**EVERYONE!**

It’s important for people of all ages, and especially for any woman who could become pregnant.

Why do we need folic acid?

**If you can have a baby, you need to get enough folate.**

**START EARLY**... Even if you’re not thinking of having a baby any time soon, you need to get enough folic acid NOW.

Getting enough folic acid before you become pregnant and in the first few weeks of pregnancy may reduce your baby’s risk of certain birth defects of the brain and spinal cord. These birth defects are called neural tube defects.

During the first six weeks of pregnancy, the baby’s brain and spine start growing from the neural tube. The neural tube must close properly. This all happens before most women even know that they are pregnant.

The two major neural tube defects are anencephaly and spina bifida. Babies with anencephaly do not develop a brain and are stillborn or die shortly after birth. Persons with spina bifida may be paralyzed and have problems with bladder and bowel control. They may have learning disabilities.

How do I get enough folate?

**Eat these folate-rich foods...**
- dark-green leafy vegetables (romaine lettuce, spinach, collard greens, broccoli, asparagus)
- fruits and juices (orange juice, pineapple juice)
- dried beans, lentils and peas (pinto, navy, lima)

Look at what you already eat. Then add **one more serving of fruit or vegetable** each day. You’ll not only get more folate—you’ll get more vitamins A and C and fiber!

**Eat these folic acid-enriched foods...**
- read the Nutrition Facts Label and look for a cereal with x% or higher
- breads, pasta and other enriched grain products