Thinking About a Baby?

Healthy Mothers Have **Healthier Babies** with Folic Acid

Emma's Story

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Folic Acid for Healthy Babies

This health message is brought to you by the
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES and the
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Emma and her husband want to start a family.

To have a healthy baby, Emma must make sure her body is healthy before she is pregnant. She sees a doctor at the local clinic right away.

Emma asks her doctor what she can do now to help her have a healthy baby.

There are many good health habits she will need to start before she is pregnant. Just one of the things Emma's doctor tells her about is a vitamin called **folic acid**.

Emma learns that folic acid can prevent most but not all serious birth defects of a baby's brain and spine.

Children born with these birth defects might not be able to run, walk, or play like other kids. Some of these babies might even die before they are born or soon after birth.

The doctor tells Emma that these birth defects can happen in the first few weeks. This is before a woman knows she is pregnant.

That is why it is important for Emma to take folic acid every day. She must take it before she is pregnant, while she is pregnant, and each day after.

Emma asks how much folic acid she should take.

The doctor says that all women need to:

Take one (1) vitamin with folic acid in it each day

or

Eat a bowl of breakfast cereal that has 100% of the Daily Value (DV) of folic acid each day

Either of these has enough folic acid to help Emma's baby to be healthy. Emma can check the label on the package of her cereal or vitamin. It should say "**100%**" next to folic acid.

Emma learned that getting enough folic acid is easy.

She does not need a prescription.

She can get the vitamins at her grocery store. They do not cost a lot of money.

Now Emma takes one pill with folic acid in it each day.

A few months later, Emma finds out she is pregnant. The doctor tells her that she is helping her baby to be healthy by taking folic acid.

She reminds Emma to keep taking folic acid each day, while she is pregnant, and even after the baby is born.

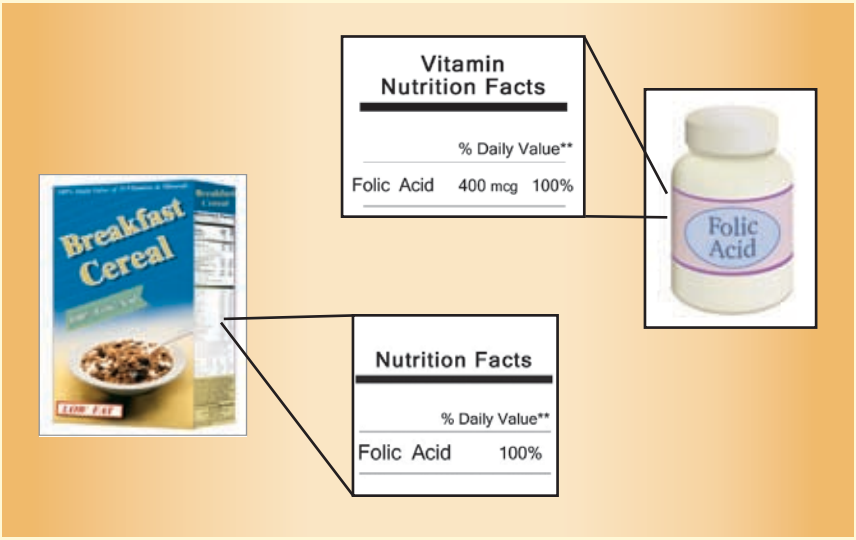
As Emma enjoys her new baby, she reminds us:

"Talk with your doctor, like I did, if you are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant. And take your folic acid every day! Don't wait! Start this good habit today, before you are pregnant."

Share Emma's story with your friends and family, so they too can have healthy babies!

Prevent birth defects before you are pregnant.

Take folic acid every day!



To learn more about folic acid and healthy babies, contact:

CDC's National Center on Birth Defects
and Developmental Disabilities
1-888-232-4636 (CDC-INFO)
Visit us online at: http://www.cdc.gov/folicacid
Email questions to FLO@cdc.gov

Remember,

To help prevent serious birth defects of the brain and spine:

- Take folic acid every day.
- Start today, before you are pregnant.
- Talk with a nurse or doctor if you are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant.
- Continue taking folic acid during your pregnancy and every day after.
- Tell your friends and family about folic acid.

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