

Abstract

Pregnancy places great strain upon the body of a woman. Many things contribute to a successful pregnancy, such as healthy eating habits, healthy lifestyle, adequate physical activity, fresh air, good mental health. It is recommended to begin folic acid supplementation even before conception. Folic acid, known as folate, is one of the B vitamins. Pregnancy places greater need for folic acid intake, especially in the early stages, where insufficiency or even deficiency can manifest in a pathological pregnancy, oftentimes fatal. The specific link between the two is not yet very well known. However, several studies have confirmed that there is a positive effect that comes with increased folic acid intake before conception and during the first few weeks of pregnancy, most notably reduced occurrence of neural tube birth defects. General population generally doesn't have adequate intake of folic acid, so there is usually a folic acid deficit before and during pregnancy as well. This can be countered by consuming food high in folate, targeted food enrichment or direct consumption of supplements containing folic acid. The Czech Republic currently doesn't enrich food with folic acid, therefore it is recommended to increase its intake via supplementation. Research investigation through paper questionnaires distributed in the offices of gynecologists, filled by 348 pregnant women, showed that not even half of them used folic acid supplements.

Key words: pregnancy, nutrition, congenital malformations, folic acid, folate