

Florida Folic Acid Council

www.folicacidnow.net



Florida Facts

- Ranks 4th in the nation in the number of annual births and Hispanic births, behind California, Texas, and New York.
- Florida had 196,963 births in 1999.
- Florida had 41,467 Hispanic births (23.8% of all births).
- Each year, approximately 120 babies in Florida are born with neural tube defects.
- For spina bifida, the lifetime medical costs per child is approximately \$530,000 with a projected cost of \$45,580,000 for the 86 cases born in 1997.
- Based on national incidence rates, Florida would have expected 197 pregnancies to be affected by an NTD in 1999. If all women of childbearing years consumed folic acid prior to pregnancy, as many as 70% or 138 of these pregnancies might not have been affected by an NTD.

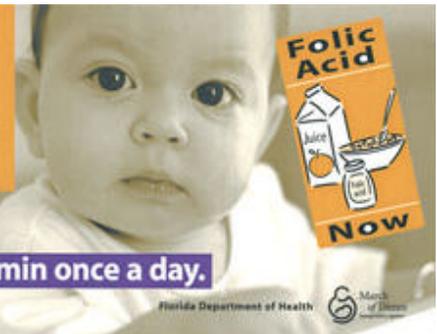
Beginnings - -

The Florida Folic Acid Council (FFAC), led by Honorary Chairperson Rhea Chiles, was formed in 1999 to launch a birth defects prevention program targeted at reducing the incidence of neural tube defects (NTDs) such as spina bifida and anencephaly. Its focus includes a statewide public-awareness campaign, professional education, and community-based educational activities promoting folic acid consumption among women in their childbearing years.

Folic acid is a B-vitamin that can be found in many vitamin pills or naturally as folate in foods such as orange juice and green leafy vegetables. It is also found in "fortified" breakfast cereals or "enriched" rice and

Take care of
your baby
before you get
pregnant ...

take a multivitamin once a day.



bread products. The United States Public Health Services recommends that all women who could become pregnant take 400 micrograms of synthetic folic acid every day, in addition to eating a diet rich in folate foods. It is critical that folic acid be taken prior to pregnancy and during the early weeks following conception, since this is when the development of the neural tube, which becomes the brain and spine, occurs.

Unfortunately, awareness of the importance of folic acid is still low among women. In a March of Dimes Gallup Poll conducted in 2000, only 1 in 3 American women reported taking a vitamin containing folic acid daily, and 9 out of 10 women did not realize that it should be taken prior to pregnancy. The Florida Folic Acid Council will continue to work actively with its partner agencies to increase the numbers of Florida women who take folic acid vitamins every day.



Published by the
Florida Folic Acid Council
Editors:
Cetta Barnhart
Jane Correia
Kimberlea Hauser
Lori Reeves



CDC Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring Survey (PRAMS) National Meeting:

Jane Correia, Florida Department of Health and Lori Reeves, M.P.H., East Central Florida Chapter, March of Dimes collaborated to give a presentation at the 2000 CDC National PRAMS meeting in Albany, New York. The presentation titled "Folic

Acid, Birth Defects, and PRAMS: Using Data to Guide the Development and Evaluation of a Prevention Initiative in Florida" demonstrated the use of PRAMS data to support the need for improved folic acid education among Florida's women and health care

professionals. Folic acid plays an essential role in the prevention of major birth defects and represents an important public health opportunity to improve the lives of families across the nation.

Florida Folic Acid Council Ambassador

Joy Barley, Florida Folic Acid Council and March of Dimes Southwest Coast Chapter Ambassador child is an enchanting eight-year old who is an inspiration to all who meet her. Though paralyzed from the waist down due to spina bifida, Joy tackles life with

great courage, a wonderful sense of humor, and a spirited "can do" attitude.

Joy and her parents, Donna and Alan Barley, share their knowledge and experience with families and health care professionals across

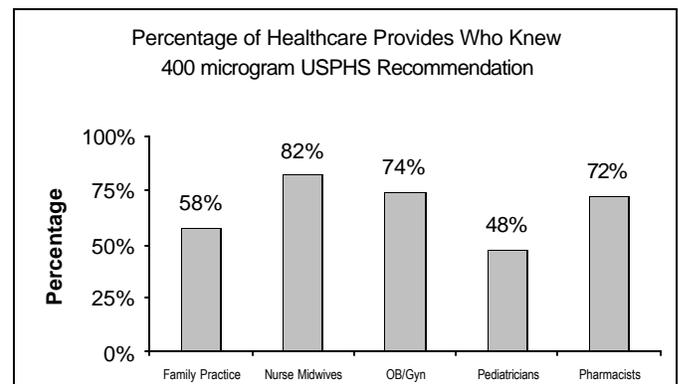
Florida by promoting the importance of consuming folic acid prior to pregnancy and the importance of seeking appropriate counseling for families at increased risk for a NTD affected pregnancy.



Joy Barley

Science Into Action

The Florida March of Dimes Chapters were recently awarded the second-year of funding for the \$100,000 per year Science Into Action Campaign through the March of Dimes' Mission Investment Opportunity Program. "Science Into Action: Florida's Folic Acid Campaign" is a statewide project funded by March of Dimes and coordinated by the University of South Florida Birth Defects Center. The goal of the project is to meas-



ure awareness and behaviors related to folic acid in Florida, to educate health professionals about incorporating the message into their practices, and to promote consumption of folic acid among women of childbearing years. In

2001, the project will use social marketing to design an outreach campaign to Hispanic women in Florida. Look for results of the Year 2000 surveys to be published early 2001.

Folic Acid Resources

*For free folic acid materials
for your patients,
contact*

Florida Department of Health
1-800-451-2229

Florida Folic Acid Council
<http://www.folicacidnow.net>

March of Dimes
1-800-MODIMES
<http://www.modimes.org>

CDC
1-888-232-6789
Email: flo@cdc.gov
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/cddh/folic/>

Recent Scientific Articles Related to Folic Acid

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Folate Status in Women of Childbearing Age—United States, 1999. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* October 27, 2000;49(42):962-5.

Stevenson RE, Allen WP, Pai GS, Best R, Seaver LH, Dean J, Thompson S. Decline in Prevalence of Neural Tube Defects in a High-Risk Region of the United States. *Pediatrics.* Vol. 106 No. 4 October 2000.

Brent RL, Oakley GP, Mattison DR. The Unnecessary Epidemic of Folic Acid-Preventable Spina Bifida and Anencephaly. *Pediatrics.* Vol. 106 No. 4 October 2000.

March of Dimes, The Gallup Organization. Folic Acid and the Prevention of Birth Defects—A National Survey of Pre-Pregnancy Awareness and Behavior Among Women of Childbearing Age 1995-2000. June 2000.

Suitor CW, Bailey LB. Dietary folate equivalents: Interpretation and application. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association.* Volume 100 No. 1 pages 88-94. January 2000

Berry RJ, Li Z, Erickson JD, Li S, Moore CA, Wang H, Mulinare J, Zhao P, Wong WYC, Gindler J, Hong SZ, Correa A. The China-U.S. Collaborative Project for Neural Tube Defect Prevention. *The New England Journal of Medicine.* Volume 342 No. 20 pages 1485-1490. November 11, 1999.

Florida Folic Acid Council

- Agency For Health Care Administration
- Florida Agricultural And Mechanical University Institute Of Public Health, College Of Pharmacy And Pharmaceutical Services
- Florida Association Of Healthy Start Coalitions
- Florida Birth Defects Registry
- Florida Blue Cross/Blue Shield
- Florida Chapter Of The American Academy Of Pediatrics/Florida Pediatric Society
- Florida Department Of Agriculture And Consumer Services
- Florida Department Of Citrus
- Florida Department Of Health
- Florida Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies
- Florida Peanut Producers Association
- Florida State University Center For Prevention And Early Intervention Policy

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Florida Folic Acid Council

- Healthy Community Initiative Of Greater Orlando
- Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County, Inc.
- Healthy Start Coalition Of Manatee County, Inc.
- Healthy Start Coalition Of Pasco County
- Healthy Start Coalition Of Southwest Florida, Inc.
- Highlands County Health Department/WIC
- JM Health Plan/Public Health Trust Of Dade County
- The Lawton And Rhea Chiles Center For Healthy Mothers And Babies, USF School Of Public Health
- March Of Dimes Florida Chapter
- Publix Grocery Stores
- Rexall Sundown
- Shriners Hospital, Tampa
- Spina Bifida Association Of Florida, Inc.
- The Florida Midwifery Resource Center
- Tropicana Products, Inc.
- University Of Florida Cooperative Extension Services
- Zeta Phi Beta Chapters Of Florida

We're Nuts About Peanuts

The *Florida Peanut Producers Association* is a statewide supporter of the Florida Folic Acid Campaign. Jeff Crawford, Executive Director, has facilitated the donation of more than 200 cases of peanuts to March of Dimes Chap-

ters around the state – that's more than 40,000 packets of peanuts. Each packet bears the March of Dimes logo and states, "Peanuts are a good natural source of the B- vitamin folic acid. Folic acid can help prevent birth defects." The

peanuts have been distributed throughout the year by the seven Florida March of Dimes chapters to help promote folic acid. Our thanks to the Florida Peanut Producers Association for being so supportive of the Florida Folic Acid Campaign.

Around the State

The Association of Women's Health, Obstetrical, and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) Florida Section is actively supporting the Florida Folic Acid Campaign. They pledge to support the March of Dimes and increase public awareness on the benefits of preconception consumption of folic acid to prevent neural tube defects. Joan Hulett, RNC, the Florida Section Chair of AWHONN, invited genetic counselor Dan Riconda to their Annual Nursing Conference to present updates on folic acid to AWHONN members and health care providers

Tropicana, Inc. continues to support activities of the Florida Folic Acid Council through public awareness and by providing orange juice at local health promotion events. Carla McGill, Ph.D., R.D., Nutrition Scientist at Tropicana, Inc., advises us that there are 75 micrograms of folate in an orange making oranges and orange juice a good source of food folate. Tropicana, Inc., provided orange juice for folic acid brunches held on the campuses of Florida A&M University and University of Florida.

Partners in Perinatal Health Sharing Solutions Conference (November 28,2000) Oral and table top presentation on Florida's folic acid campaign were presented by Jane Correia, Florida DOH, Lori Reeves, MOD East Central Florida Chapter, and Kimberlea Hauser, USF Birth Defects Center. Table top presentation was hosted by Cetta Barnhart.

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month and you can plan folic acid events to support this important public health prevention opportunity. National Birth Defects Prevention Network Meeting will be held January 29-31, 2001, in San Antonio, Texas. For more information, please visit www.nbdpn.org



From the MOD Chapters

In the March of Dimes East Central Florida Chapter, Kathy Seltzer, RN, MSN, ARNP, an AWHONN member in Volusia County, participated in a “Family Health and Fitness Day” at the Daytona Beach Community College. Preconception education, classes and counseling including nutrition and information on folic acid education and promotion were made available to the public and to health professionals.

The March of Dimes Southwest Coast Chapter worked with Lee and Charlotte County Medical Society Executive Directors to publish newsletter articles discussing the findings of the March of Dimes Gallup Survey 2000, according to Tricia Christian, Director of Program Services and Communication. The survey revealed women’s lack of knowledge about folic acid, and that only 1 in 5 women identified their health care provider as the source of information about folic acid. The Southwest Coast Chapter will prepare a small package of folic acid literature for each physician, along with the survey’s findings, which was mailed out with their regular membership mailing. Collier County Medical Society said that March of Dimes could submit an article to be included in their fall newsletter. Over 600 physicians received information in this manner, and utilizing an existing mailing system that was already in place minimized the cost. Here is a success story that could possibly be duplicated in other areas.

The March of Dimes Northwest Florida Chapter and the Florida Department of Health collaborated on a newspaper supplement titled “Folic Acid Now” for the October 11, 2000 Tallahassee Democrat. It is estimated that 50,000 copies were distributed to subscribers across the Florida Big Bend Area. Included were articles from Rhea Chiles, Honorary Chairperson of the Florida Folic Acid Council, David Campell, Executive Director of the Northwest Florida Chapter of the March of Dimes, Robert G. Brooks, M.D., Secretary of the Department of Health, folic acid recipes, and a Frequently Asked Questions section.

The Folic Acid Now module, used to train nurses and nutritionists on how to communicate to their patients the importance of taking 400 micrograms of folic acid prior to pregnancy, was recently developed by University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences (IFAS), with funding from North Central Florida and East Central Florida March of Dimes, Florida Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and North Central Florida Healthy Start. Dr. Lynn Bailey, Dr. Gail Kauwell and Gail Rampersaud, of IFAS, had integral roles in the development of this module.

The module was pilot tested amongst nurses from five public health departments representing Alachua, Marion, Levy, Columbia, and Orange counties, with very positive feedback. If you would like more information on the module, please call the North Central Florida March of Dimes at (352) 378-9522 and ask for Joana Principe.



*Family Health and
Fitness Day,
Volusia County
Kathy Seltzer from
AHWONN*

**Look for news on the
next Statewide Meeting
May 2001**

Florida Folic Acid Council Supporters

The Florida Folic Acid Council would like to recognize the generous donations of the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County, Spina Bifida Association of Florida, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Florida, Florida Pediatric Society, The Lawton & Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mother and Babies, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services-Division of Food Safety, Zeta Phi Beta Chapters of Florida, Florida State University Center for Prevention, North Florida

Women's Physicians, and the Florida Chapters of the March of Dimes. With their donations, the Florida Folic Acid Council was awarded \$15,000 from the National March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation to support Council activities including the hiring of Ms. Cetta Barnhart and the Perfect Little Office.

For the year 2001, the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation will again provide funding for folic acid campaigns. Additional funds of up to

\$15,000 will be available if matching dollars can be found. In the next few months, the Florida Folic Acid Council, working with Cetta Barnhart, will be contacting members regarding providing matching funds for the campaign.

March of Dimes
East Central Florida Chapter
341 Maitland Blvd, Suite 115
Maitland, FL

Phone: 407-599-5077
Fax: 407-599-5780
Email: LReeves@modimes.org