

# B Vitamins that Help Prevent Birth Defects

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Folic Acid is one of the B vitamins that people, especially women, need in their daily diet. It helps build red blood cells and prevents certain anemias. This vitamin is important during the childbearing years. Studies show that folic acid may prevent miscarriages and birth defects such as Spina Bifida (open spine).

Women planning to get pregnant need to take a multivitamin which has 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid each day, beginning at least 3 months before conception. Pregnant women should take 600 mcg during pregnancy, not to exceed 1000 mcg per day. Many prenatal vitamins containing 600-800 mcg of folic acid are available over the counter, but your physician will most likely prescribe a prenatal vitamin for you. It is best for all women of childbearing age to take a multivitamin with 400 mcg of folic acid every day. Most multivitamins formulated for women contain 400 mcg.

Folic acid has also been shown to be important in the prevention of heart disease and colon cancer. All adults and children should consume at least 400 micrograms each day. The United States government requires that commercially produced foods made from grains, such as breakfast cereals and breads, be fortified with folic acid. Folate is the name for naturally occurring folic acid. Some foods which contain folate are listed below. Foods with folate should be eaten every day.

To be called a “Good Source” of folate, a food should have at least 10% of the daily recommended allowance. It is important to eat a variety of foods to get the recommended amount. Folate is easily lost during cooking and processing, so fresh foods remain the best sources.



## GOOD SOURCES

### Folate per ½ cup serving 100 micrograms or more of:

Black Beans	Chickpeas	Peanuts	Fortified Grains
Cooked Spinach	Liver	Orange Juice	Fortified Cereals
Cooked Lentils	Soybeans		

### Folate per ½ cup serving 40 to 99 micrograms of:

Collard greens	Brussels Sprouts	Turnip Greens	Oranges
Cooked Rice	Broccoli	Raspberries	Pineapple Juice
Lima Beans	Tomato Juice	Papaya	

SOME GOOD SOURCES OF FOLATE			
Food	Serving Size	Amount (Micrograms)	% Daily Value*
Asparagus, cooked	½ cup	132	33
Avocado	1 medium	113-162	28-40
Baked beans with pork	1 cup	92	23
Black beans, cooked	½ cup	128	32
White beans, cooked	½ cup	123	31
Broccoli, cooked	½ cup	39	10
Brussels sprouts, cooked	½ cup	47	12
Chickpeas	½ cup	141	35
Collard greens, cooked	½ cup	64	16
Kidney beans, cooked	½ cup	115	29
Lentils, cooked	½ cup	180	45
Lima beans, cooked	½ cup	78	20
Orange	1 medium	47	12
Orange juice	1 cup	109	27
Papaya	1 cup	49	12
Pineapple juice	1 cup	58	14
Raspberries, frozen	1 cup	65	16
Spinach, cooked	½ cup	131	33
Tomato juice	1 cup	48	12
Turnip greens, cooked	½ cup	86	21
Braised beef liver	3.5 oz	217	54
Burrito with beans	2 oz.	118	30
Chicken liver	3.5 oz	770	193
Cereal bars	1 bar	40-100	10-25
Fortified bread	1 slice	38	10
Fortified cereals	½ to 1 ½ cup	100 to 400	25 to 100
Pasta, cooked	about 1 cup	100-120	25-30
Rice, cooked	¾ cup	60	15
Wheat germ	2 tbsp	38	10
Peanuts	1/3 cup	117	29
Soybeans	½ cup	122	30
Sunflower seeds	1/3 cup	109	27

# Dried Beans are a Good Source of Folate

## Bean Facts

- A 15-ounce can of beans provides about three 1/2-cup servings of beans.
- One pound of dry edible beans yields about 6 cups of cooked beans.
- The cost of a 15-ounce can of beans ranges from about 33–67 cents per 1/2-cup serving, depending on whether people buy the store brand instead of the national brand.
- A half cup of dry beans, cooked from scratch, costs about 17 cents.
- One type of bean can usually be substituted for another type in recipes. Taste and color may vary slightly.

## How to Cook Beans from Scratch:

There are two steps to cooking beans from scratch—soaking and cooking.

Soaking allows the bean to absorb water, allowing the beans to double or triple in size. Soak with one of these methods:

Hot Soak or Quick Soak. “Hot soaking” helps dissolve some of the gas-causing substances in beans and most consistently produces tender beans. In a large pot, add

10 cups of water for each pound (2 cups) of dry beans. Heat to boiling; boil for 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and soak for at least 1 hour (Quick Soak) or up to 4 hours (Hot Soak).

Traditional Overnight Soak. This is the easiest method. Place dry beans in a large container; for each pound (2 cups) beans, add 10 cups of cold water. Cover and refrigerate 8 hours or overnight.

*Note: Lentils, split peas and blackeyed peas do not need to be soaked before cooking.*

After soaking, drain and rinse beans with fresh, cool water.

To cook beans, place beans in a large pot; cover with fresh water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer gently until beans are tender but firm.

Periodically, try a taste test or mash a bean against the side of the pot with a fork or spoon. Check occasionally if you need to add more water. Most beans will cook in 45 minutes to 2 hours.

Herbs and spices may be added any time; add salt when beans are tender as it tends to toughen them. Add acidic foods (lemon juice, vinegar, tomatoes, wine, etc.) after beans are cooked as these foods can prevent beans from becoming tender.

Refrigerate cooked beans in shallow pans if they are to be eaten later. Freeze any extra beans within 4 days after cooking them.

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