Spina bifida occurs when a baby is still in the womb, and is known as a neural tube defect which can affect the brain. Very often these cases lead to termination, stillbirth, the death of the newborn baby or serious disability. Some protection can come from folic acid, naturally present in some foods, cereals and wholemeal bread. But it is hard to consume enough from purely natural sources, so the Department of Health has been advising pregnant women to take folic acid supplement since 1992. New research suggests as many as 28% of women ignore the advice and don't take folic acid while pregnant. In 1998 the authorities in the US started adding folic acid to flour for bread and since then have seen a dramatic fall in babies developing these defects. If the UK had adopted a similar policy, researchers say that

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since 1998 more than 2000 cases would have been avoided. It is getting to women who are basically healthy before they are pregnant when we have around 50% of pregnancies in this country that are still unplanned. It was always a tall order that would need a massive sustained campaign over and over again. No government has really tackled that head-long. Successive governments have been advised to follow the US example and introduce folic acid to flour for bread, most recently in October. The Department of Health has said they are still

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considering the latest recommendations. With me now is Professor Joan Morris, who is an expert in preventative medicine at the Queen Mary University of London. prevent these diseases. Well if a woman has a reasonable level at the first two weeks of pregnancy, it will be preventative in stopping the nural tube defects. Why put it in into flour in particular? Well it gets into all food stuffs, if you put it in flour, most women will get a reasonable level. This has been recommended many times, it has been recommended in 2012, various years it has been recommended and never been done. Why is that? I think it is illogical. Across the world 78

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countries do it. The whole of America, svt America, China and they have seen falls in babies being born. It is just in the UK I guess we are hesitant about putting something into food stuffs. But it is illogical. We should do it. Because we are causing babies to be born with defects that we could prevent. Can you quantify that? About 150 babies a year would be prevented from having this defect. Thalidomide had about 600 babies born with difficulties, and we reacted to that. Whose decision is it? The government's decision? I needs to be a Government decision to

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put the folic acid in the flour. Scientifically the scientific community is positive we should be doing it. The food industry, would they object? No, they're happy to do that. They already fortify flour with things like iron. Will it happen at some stage, do you think it will happen? I hope so! It seems extraordinary that so much of the world does it and we don't. Yes, it is just extraordinary. And it should be corrected. The longer we take, the more babies are being born. Does that make you angry? Yes there is lots of birth defects we are not sure about how to prevent, but we found out in 91 this this a work. What are the other ways if you want to get folic acid and if somebody thinks I need to dose up on that? We do advise women who before they become pregnant to take folic acid

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supplements. They're easy to get over the counter and are simple to take and cheap. But the key point is if you're thinking of becoming pregnant, take it before you get pregnant. And the foods that are rich in folic acid are what? Things like leafy green vegetables. Things broccoli? Yes it is hard to get enough, it is better to take a supplement to get your levels high. Thank you very much. The Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales has warned that so-called legal highs are currently the number one threat to prison safety and security. Nick Hardwick, who is due to leave his post in January, has criticised the government, for being slow to tackle the problem. Our Home Affairs Correspondent Dominic Casiani reports. A signal on the phone, and the package is up and away. Drugs and a McDonald's breakfast delivered to an inmate

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at Wormwood Scrubs prison in London. Carl Jenson is now behind bars, but the Chief Inspector of Prisons says smuggling of new drugs is causing huge problems across England and Wales. So-called legal highs are chemically engineered drugs that mimic banned substances. They are cheap to produce, and prisons inspectors say they can be smuggled undetected. In a highly critical report into what are officially called new psychoactive substances, the watchdog says there have been 67 deaths linked to the drugs. Too many local ambulances have been tied up responding to inmates who have fallen ill. And some released offenders deliberately break the law so they can smuggle more drugs back in. There has been a surge in the availability of so-called legal highs in prisons, drugs that go under the name of spice and mamba, and we now think

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