Daily Mirror

**December** 18, 2015 Friday   
Edition 1;   
Northern Ireland

Govt **folic acid** failure blamed for disabilities in 2,000 babies  
  
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**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 20  
  
**LENGTH:** 158 words

BABIES are suffering serious damage in the womb due to the failure to add **folic acid** to **flour**, claim researchers.

They say the tragic toll of babies with neural tube defects - which include crippling conditions such as spina bifida - could have been cut by more than 2,000 in the UK since 1998 had governments followed advice.

In 78 countries which added the vitamin, found naturally in foods like leafy greens, the percentage of babies born with neural tube defects fell. In the US, adding **folic acid** has led to 23% fewer cases since 1998.

Experts from Queen Mary University London, Public Health England and Oxford University compared the scandal to the drug thalidomide, which caused **birth defects**.

They said it was "a public health failure" and added that fortifying **flour** was a safety net for women who didn't take the recommended daily dose of **folic acid** in pregnancy. Around 70% of women fail to take supplements.

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