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| 1. | [HUNDREDS OF BIRTH DEFECTS DUE TO LACK OF FOLIC ACID'](#doc_id_1) DAILY MAIL (London), December 18, 2015 Friday, 266 words, BY BEN SPENCER MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT |

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| 2. | [Govt folic acid failure blamed for disabilities in 2,000 babies](#doc_id_2) Daily Mirror, December 18, 2015 Friday, NEWS; Pg. 20, 158 words, ANDREW GREGORY |

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| 3. | [Birth defects 'caused by lack of folic acid'; HEALTH](#doc_id_3) i-Independent Print Ltd, December 18, 2015, NEWS; Pg. 8, 136 words, Jane Kirby |

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| 4. | [2,000 babies suffer serious defects 'because of failure to add folic acid'; These cases could have been avoided if the UK had followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to flour](#doc_id_4) Independent.co.uk, December 18, 2015 Friday 12:58 PM GMT, HEALTH NEWS, 945 words, Jane Kirby |

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| 5. | [Hundreds of birth defects 'due to lack of folic acid'](#doc_id_5) Scottish Daily Mail, December 18, 2015 Friday, NEWS; Pg. 33, 194 words, Ben Spencer |

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| 6. | [FOLIC ACID BABY FEAR](#doc_id_6) The Sun (England), December 18, 2015 Friday, NEWS; Pg. 30, 160 words, NICK MCDERMOTT |

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| 7. | [FOLIC ACID BABY FEAR](#doc_id_7) The Sun (England), December 18, 2015 Friday, NEWS; Pg. 30, 163 words, NICK MCDERMOTT |

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| 8. | [FOLIC ACID BABY FEAR](#doc_id_8) The Sun (England), December 18, 2015 Friday, NEWS; Pg. 30, 163 words, NICK MCDERMOTT |

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| 9. | [Failure to fortify flour is causing more disability than thalidomide scandal, warn researchers; The government has been dragging its feet over folic acid supplementation even though it could prevent 150 babies being disabled each year](#doc_id_9) telegraph.co.uk, December 18, 2015 Friday 3:55 PM GMT, 610 words, By Sarah Knapton Science Editor |

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| 10. | [babies](#doc_id_10) suffering from ‘illogical’ failure over folic acid Daily Telegraph, December 18, 2015 Friday 521 words, By Sarah Knapton Science Editor |

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| 11. | [Why mothers-to-be should be super healthy (Part 3)](#doc_id_11) Arab News, December 16, 2015 Wednesday, 1403 words |

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| 12. | Hundreds of birth defects 'due to a lack of folic acid': More than 2,000 babies said to have died or been left disabled because ministers refused to accept nutritional advice MailOnline, December 18, 2015 Friday, 856 words, By Ben Spencer Medical Correspondent |

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| 13. | Over 2,000 babies suffered serious defects 'due to Government's failure to add folic acid to flour';  Around 150 cases a year since 1998 could have been avoided if the UK had followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to flour, researchers said mirror.co.uk, December 18, 2015 Friday, 692 words, By Andrew Gregory |

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| 14. | Help for healthy babies The [...] The Times (Scotland), December 18, 2015 Friday, 61 words |

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| 15. | Help for healthy babies The [...] The Times, December 18, 2015 Friday, 61 words |

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DAILY MAIL (London)

**December** 18, 2015 Friday

**HUNDREDS OF BIRTH DEFECTS DUE TO LACK OF FOLIC ACID'**

**BYLINE:** BY BEN SPENCER MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

**LENGTH:** 266 words

MORE than 2,000 babies have died or been born disabled because of ministers' refusal to adopt nutritional advice on **folic acid**, experts claim.

Scientists have repeatedly advised the Government to ensure food firms add **folic acid** to flour, a measure they say reduces the risk of babies being born with major defects such as spina bifida.

However ministers have stalled on implementing the guidance - and researchers now say serious problems in some 2,014 pregnancies over 14 years could have been avoided if they had.

Experts from six universities - including Oxford - along with Public Health England and Public Health Wales, believe there would have been around a 21 per cent drop in cases of serious defects in pregnancy if the UK had made fortifying flour mandatory in 1998, the same as the US.

Official figures show that 85 per cent of British women aged 16 to 49 have low **folic acid** levels. The B vitamin has several important functions, including the formation of red blood cells.

Writing in the journal Archives of Disease in Childhood, the authors said: In the USA, following the introduction of mandatory fortification of flour, there was an approximate 23 per cent reduction in affected births.

The failure of Britain to fortify flour with **folic acid** has had significant consequences.'

Experts on the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition wrote to ministers in October expressing concern that **folic acid** proposals made in 2000, 2006 and 2009 had not been adopted.

A Department of Health spokesman said the recommendations put forward in October are currently being considered'.

© Daily Mail

**LOAD-DATE:** December 17, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Papers

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Daily Mirror

**December** 18, 2015 Friday

Edition 1;

Northern Ireland

**Govt folic acid failure blamed for disabilities in 2,000 babies**

**BYLINE:** ANDREW GREGORY

**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.

Baby andrew.gregory@mirror.co.uk

**LOAD-DATE:** December 18, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** AT RISK Baby

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** DMR

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i-Independent Print Ltd

**December** 18, 2015

First Edition

**Birth defects 'caused by lack of folic acid';**

**HEALTH**

**BYLINE:** Jane Kirby

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 8

**LENGTH:** 136 words

More than 2,000 babies have suffered serious defects such as spina bifida since 1998 because of the Government's failure to add **folic acid** to flour, researchers say.

These cases could have been avoided if the UK had followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to flour, they claimed.

Rates of neural tube defects - **birth defects** of the brain, spine or spinal cord - are not falling across the UK, resulting in death of the foetus or newborn baby, or life-long disability in those who survive.

Last month, government advisers wrote to ministers expressing their concern that recommendations made in 2000, 2006 and 2009 to improve levels of **folic acid** intake had still not been taken on board.

Women are urged to take 400mcg of **folic acid** daily whilst trying to conceive and for the first three months of pregnancy.

**LOAD-DATE:** December 17, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** III

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Independent.co.uk

**December** 18, 2015 Friday 12:58 PM GMT

**2,000 babies suffer serious defects 'because of failure to add folic acid';**

**These cases could have been avoided if the UK had followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to flour**

**BYLINE:** Jane Kirby

**SECTION:** HEALTH NEWS

**LENGTH:** 945 words

Around 2,000 babies have suffered serious defects such as spina bifida since 1998 owing to the Government's failure to add **folic acid** to flour, researchers have said.

These cases - around 150 a year - could have been avoided if the UK had followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to flour, they said.

Taking **folic acid** can enhance fertility in men, researchers say

Rates of neural tube defects - **birth defects** of the brain, spine or spinal cord - are not falling across the UK, resulting in death of the foetus or newborn baby, or life-long disability in those who survive.

Last month, Government advisers wrote to ministers expressing their concern that recommendations made in 2000, 2006 and 2009 to improve levels of **folic acid** intake had still not been taken on board.

Members of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) pointed to a rising number of abortions in England and Wales for neural tube defects, with 420 in 2013, up from 390 in 2012 and 299 in 2009.

Women are urged to take 400mcg of **folic acid** daily whilst trying to conceive and for the first three months of pregnancy to cut the chance of neural tube defects, which include spina bifida and anencephaly.

However, research has found that over 70% of women do not take the supplements regularly or early enough in pregnancy.

In the US, fortifying flour with **folic acid** has led to a 23% reduction in neural tube defects.

The new research, published online in the Archives of Disease in Childhood, estimates the number of defects that could have been avoided if the UK had adopted a flour fortification policy in 1998, the same year the US adopted the policy.

Researchers said 2,014 cases of defects could have been prevented - equivalent to a 21% drop in cases. They said asking women to take supplements was not working and that fortifying flour was "remarkably safe".

They said: "Our results show that in the UK between 1998 and 2012, there was little, if any, change in the prevalence of pregnancies with a neural tube defect, while in the USA, quickly following the introduction of mandatory fortification of flour with **folic acid** in 1998, there was an approximate 23% reduction in the occurrence of affected births.

"It is a public health failure that Britain has not implemented the fortification of flour with **folic acid** for the prevention of spina bifida and other (neural tube defects)."

"Given the evidence from the Medical Research Council Vitamin Study regarding the efficacy of **folic acid** in preventing neural tube defects, the failure of Britain to fortify flour with **folic acid** has had significant consequences.

"The recent evidence that only 28% of pregnant women in England in 2012 took **folic acid** supplements at the correct time indicates that, in practice, recommending **folic acid** supplementation is largely ineffective."

From 1998 to 2012, some 1.28 pregnancies per 1,000 births were affected by a neural tube defect, of which 81% resulted in an abortion.

The research was carried out by experts including from Queen Mary University London, Public Health England (PHE) and Oxford University.

"There is strong evidence to suggest that **folic acid** supplementation before pregnancy reduces the number of pregnancies affected by neural tube defects, such as spina bifida.

They compared the situation with thalidomide, which resulted in the births of 500 people with disabilities in the UK.

"Justifiably, steps were introduced to immediately halt the epidemic, and regulatory precautions were introduced to avoid another similar epidemic," they said. "Unfortunately, no such sense of urgency has been applied to the prevention of spina bifida.

"It is a public health failure that Britain has not implemented the fortification of flour with **folic acid** for the prevention of spina bifida and other (neural tube defects)."

They said this failure "has caused, and continues to cause, avoidable terminations of pregnancy, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and permanent serious disability in surviving children".

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at Public Health England, said: "Implementing the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's advice to add **folic acid** to flour would reduce the risk of **birth defects**, such as spina bifida, in pregnancy.

"PHE's analysis shows that 85% of 16 to 49-year-old women have **folic acid** levels below the new World Health Organisation recommendation for women entering pregnancy.

"This highlights the importance for pregnant women, and those trying or likely to get pregnant, of taking a daily **folic acid** supplement of 400 micrograms - before and up to the 12th week of pregnancy."

Professor Alan Cameron, vice president of clinical quality for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), said: "There is strong evidence to suggest that **folic acid** supplementation before pregnancy reduces the number of pregnancies affected by neural tube defects, such as spina bifida.

"The RCOG is calling for mandatory fortification of bread or flour with **folic acid** in the UK with the appropriate safeguards, such as controls on voluntary fortification by the food industry and better guidance on supplement use.

"Food fortification will reach women most at risk due to poor dietary habits or socio-economic status as well as those women who may not have planned their pregnancy."

PA

**LOAD-DATE:** December 18, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper; Web Publication

**JOURNAL-CODE:** WEBI

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Scottish Daily Mail

**December** 18, 2015 Friday

Edition 1;

Scotland

**Hundreds of birth defects 'due to lack of folic acid'**

**BYLINE:** Ben Spencer

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 33

**LENGTH:** 194 words

MORE than 2,000 babies have died or been born disabled because of ministers' refusal to adopt nutritional advice on **folic acid**, experts claim.

Scientists have repeatedly advised the Government to ensure food firms add **folic acid** to flour, a measure they say reduces the risk of babies being born with major defects such as spina bifida.

However ministers failed to implement the guidance - and researchers now say serious problems in some 2,014 pregnancies over 14 years could have been avoided if they had.

Experts from six universities, along with Public Health England and Public Health Wales, believe there would have been around a 21 per cent drop in cases of serious defects in pregnancy if the UK had made fortifying flour mandatory in 1998, the same as the US. Writing in the journal Archives of Disease in Childhood, the authors said: 'In the USA, following the introduction of mandatory fortification of flour, there was an approximate 23 per cent reduction in affected births.

'The failure of Britain to fortify flour with **folic acid** has had significant consequences.' A Department of Health spokesman said the recommendation is 'currently being considered'.

**LOAD-DATE:** December 18, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** DMLscot

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The Sun (England)

**December** 18, 2015 Friday

Edition 1;

National Edition

**FOLIC ACID BABY FEAR**

**BYLINE:** NICK MCDERMOTT

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 30

**LENGTH:** 160 words

MORE than 2,000 babies have suffered **birth defects** because ministers have failed to add **folic acid** to bread, a study claims.

Scientists have been urging the Government to fortify flour with the B vitamin since the late 1990s.

They warn 85 per cent of mums-to-be have dangerously low levels, increasing their tot's risk of neural tube problems such as spina bifida. And less than a third of pregnant women take supplements.

Experts estimate 2,014 cases of babies with **birth defects** could have been avoided since 1998 if Britain had followed the example of 78 other countries. The new study's lead researcher Prof Joan Morris, of London's Queen Mary University, said fortifying flour was "remarkably safe". In the US, the policy had led to a 23 per cent reduction in neural tube defects.

Prof Morris likened the UK "public health failure" to the 1960s thalidomide **birth defects** scandal. Nutrition experts last month urged ministers to add **folic acid** to bread and flour.

**LOAD-DATE:** December 18, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Vitamin ... folic

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** SUN

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The Sun (England)

**December** 18, 2015 Friday

Edition 1;

Scotland

**FOLIC ACID BABY FEAR**

**BYLINE:** NICK MCDERMOTT

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 30

**LENGTH:** 163 words

MORE than 2,000 babies have suffered **birth defects** because ministers have failed to add **folic acid** to bread, a study claims.

Scientists have been urging the Government to fortify flour with the B vitamin since the late 1990s. They warn 85 per cent of mums-to-be have dangerously low levels, increasing their tot's risk of neural tube problems such as spina bifida. And less than a third of pregnant women take supplements.

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Prof Morris likened the UK "public health failure" to the 1960s thalidomide **birth defects** scandal. Nutrition experts last month urged ministers to add **folic acid** to bread and flour... folic

**LOAD-DATE:** December 18, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Vitamin ... folic

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** SUN

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The Sun (England)

**December** 18, 2015 Friday

Edition 1;

Northern Ireland

**FOLIC ACID BABY FEAR**

**BYLINE:** NICK MCDERMOTT

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 30

**LENGTH:** 163 words

MORE than 2,000 babies have suffered **birth defects** because ministers have failed to add **folic acid** to bread, a study claims.

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Prof Morris likened the UK "public health failure" to the 1960s thalidomide **birth defects** scandal. Nutrition experts last month urged ministers to add **folic acid** to bread and flour.. .. folic

**LOAD-DATE:** December 18, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Vitamin ... folic

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** SUN

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telegraph.co.uk

**December** 18, 2015 Friday 3:55 PM GMT

**Failure to fortify flour is causing more disability than thalidomide scandal, warn researchers;**

**The government has been dragging its feet over folic acid supplementation even though it could prevent 150 babies being disabled each year**

**BYLINE:** By Sarah Knapton Science Editor

**LENGTH:** 610 words

The failure to put **folic acid** in flour is leaving 150 babies a year severely from diseases like spina bifida and causing more deformities than the thalidomide health scandal of the 50s and 60s, researchers have warned.

**Folic acid** is crucial to the healthy development of a baby in the womb and yet although pregnant women have been urged to take **folic acid** supplements for decades the rates of neural tube defects - **birth** **defects** of the brain, spine or spinal cord - have not fallen.

The Food Standards Agency, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition and the Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies have all called for it to be added to bread, but the government has so far taken no action .

"It is a public health failure that Britain has not implemented the fortification of flour with **folic acid** for the prevention of spina bifida and other neural tube defects" Prof Joan Morris Queen Mary, University of London

Now new research has shown the devastating cost of delays. Researchers from Queen Mary University of London compared Britain to the US, where bread has been supplemented with **folic acid** - the synthetic form of vitamin B9 - since 1998.

Based on the success of the scheme in the US, scientists concluded that if a similar policy had been in place in the UK between 1998 and 2012, more than 2,000 babies would not have been born disabled or aborted, around 150 a year.

The researchers compares the situation to thalidomide, which resulted in the births of 500 people with growth abnormalities in the UK when pregnant women were given the drug to ease morning sickness.

A team led by Professor Joan Morris, of the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine at Queen Mary said the failure to fortify flour has had 'significant consequences.'

"It is a public health failure that Britain has not implemented the fortification of flour with **folic acid** for the prevention of spina bifida and other neural tube defects," she said.

"This failure has caused, and continues to cause, avoidable terminations of pregnancy, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and permanent serious disability in surviving children."

Researchers say that the UK should follow the lead of the US and 77 other countries, to curb the associated toll of foetal and infant death and disability.

They compare the current situation with thalidomide, which resulted in the births of 500 people with disabilities in the UK.

"Justifiably, steps were introduced to immediately halt the epidemic, and regulatory precautions were introduced to avoid another similar epidemic," they write in a paper for the journal Archive of Childhood Diseases.

"Unfortunately, no such sense of urgency has been applied to the prevention of spina bifida.

"It is illogical to take preventive public health action to avoid a drug-induced congenital anomaly, but to largely ignore action in relation to a congenital anomaly which can be prevented by vitamin fortification of flour, when the failure to act has resulted in, and continues to result in, many more serious cases."

In 1991 the UK Medical Research Council Vitamin Study showed that a supplement of **folic acid** taken before and during early pregnancy cut the risk of neural tube defects by around 72 per cent.

In 1992 the Department of Health in England advised women to take **folic acid** supplements before pregnancy to reduce their risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect, but the evidence shows that fewer than one in three women take them.

A Department of Health spokesperson said: "The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition submitted recommendations to Government around **folic acid** and bread in October. We are currently considering these."

**LOAD-DATE:** December 18, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper; Web Publication

**JOURNAL-CODE:** WEBDTNS

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The Daily Telegraph (London)

**December** 18, 2015 Friday   
Edition 1;   
National Edition

Babies suffering from 'illogical' failure over **folic acid**  
  
**BYLINE:** Sarah Knapton  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 10  
  
**LENGTH:** 521 words

THE failure to put **folic acid** in flour is leaving 150 babies a year suffering from diseases such as **spina** **bifida** and causing more deformities than the thalidomide scandal, researchers have said. **Folic acid** is crucial to the healthy development of a baby in the womb. Although pregnant women have for decades been urged to take **folic acid** supplements, the rates of **neural tube** **defects** - of the brain, spine or spinal cord - have not fallen.

The Food Standards Agency, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition and Dame Sally Davies, the chief medical officer, have all called for it to be added to bread but the Government has so far not taken any action.

Prof Joan Morris, who led the research team at the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine at Queen Mary University of London, said the failure to fortify flour has had "significant consequences".

"It is a public health failure that Britain has not implemented the fortification of flour with **folic acid** for the prevention of **spina** **bifida**and other **neural tube** **defects**," she said.

"This failure has caused, and continues to cause, avoidable terminations of pregnancy, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and permanent serious disability in surviving children."

The researchers compared Britain with the United States, where bread has been supplemented with **folic acid** - the synthetic form of vitamin B9 - since 1998. Based on the success of the US scheme, scientists concluded that if a similar policy had been in place in the UK between 1998 and 2012, more than 2,000 babies - around 150 a year - would not have been aborted or born disabled.

The researchers said Britain should follow the lead of the US and 77 other countries to curb the associated toll of foetal and infant death and disability.

The team compared the situation to thalidomide, the drug given to pregnant women to ease morning sickness in the Fifties and Sixties, which resulted in the births of 500 people with growth abnormalities in the UK.

"Justifiably, steps were introduced to immediately halt the epidemic, and regulatory precautions were introduced to avoid another similar epidemic," they wrote in a paper for the journal Archive of Childhood Diseases.

"Unfortunately, no such sense of urgency has been applied to the prevention of **spina** **bifida**.

"It is illogical to take preventive public health action to avoid a druginduced congenital anomaly, but to largely ignore action in relation to a congenital anomaly which can be prevented by vitamin fortification of flour, when the failure to act has resulted in, and continues to result in, many more serious cases."

In 1991, the UK Medical Research Council Vitamin Study showed that a supplement of **folic acid** taken before and during early pregnancy cut the risk of **neural tube** **defects** by about 72 per cent.

In 1992, the Department of Health in England advised women to take **folic acid** supplements before pregnancy to reduce the risk of having a baby with a **neural tube** **defect**, but evidence shows fewer than one in three women did so.

2,000 The estimated number of babies aborted or born disabled between 1998 and 2012 attributed to a lack of **folic acid** in bread

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Arab News

**December** 16, 2015 Wednesday

**Why mothers-to-be should be super healthy (Part 3)**

**LENGTH:** 1403 words

Mariam Alireza

Last week, I discussed the necessity for a mother-to-be to keep fit and healthy in order to prevent nutrient depletion, which could make her too weak to complete her gestation period and produce a healthy and strong baby. In ancient cultures and until recently in some, buxom and robust young women were found more suitable for marriage, childbearing, and to work in the fields than thinner and more frail women. They were once recommended for marriage over their skinnier and more delicate counterparts. For reproduction, the fittest were the most desired for marriage and not the most beautiful.

I also wrote about the roles of both parents-to-be, which include the father's proactive part and understanding during the entire process. Today as I promised last week, I shall go into details about nutrients suggested by Dr. Catherine Shanahan in order to keep mother healthy enough to perform her reproductive duties, thus helping make her pregnancies successful, childbirth incident-free, and making her milk sufficient for her infant.

Because of fetal demands of fast growth and mental and physical developments, a mother has to be fully stocked in a whole range of nutrients like iron (**folic acid**), calcium, selenium, magnesium, potassium, iodine, phosphorus, zinc, vitamins A, Bs, C, D (sunshine), E, and K and of course omega-3, DHA, and the other essential fatty acids needed for building the baby's central nervous system and brain.

Without healthy fats in mother's diet, the fetus will take from the mother's brain its needs, resulting in mother's emotional breakdowns (crying, postpartum blues, depression), forgetfulness, and poor concentration. According to Dr. Catherine Shanahan, mothers' brain could actually shrink in certain areas such as the hippocampal and temporal lobes, which govern the emotions as well as the short-term memory.

Mother's supplements of essential fatty acids (omega-3 fatty acids) from cod liver oil and salmon have been shown to produce "protective and lasting effects on the baby's intelligence." Shanahan recommends mothers-to-be to take the supplement to get the protection for herself and child. Essential fatty acids are available in purified, palatable and smell-free softgels in heath stores.

Studies have shown **folic acid** to prevent neural tube defects called spina bifida, a fatal deformity, Down syndrome, and miscarriages. **Folic acid** deficiency in fathers-to-be could also interfere with the genetic quality of sperms, possibly leading to Down syndrome. Without **folic acid**, the body will not be able make healthy DNA to produce a healthy fetus as well as red blood cells to have enough oxygen. The nutrient is found in leafy greens, cabbage family, avocados, beans, and others. Studies found that prenatal vitamin D insufficiency resulted in higher risk of schizophrenia, diabetes, and skeletal diseases in newborns. Vitamin D3 is the most bioavailable type. It becomes even more effective if 25 percent of the body gets exposed to 15 to 20 minutes of daily sunlight.

Choline is another nutrient that is important to the brain of the fetus. Mothers' deficiency in choline during pregnancy was associated with lifelong learning disabilities in their children. Unfortunately, the nutrient is not included in prenatal multivitamins prescribed to mothers-to-be. Choline is abundant in soybean, but do not exceed the consumption of soy products.

Shanahan advises the mother to nourish her body with adequate nutrients before conception, during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and even later, especially if she wishes to start another baby. Her body should to be replenished with nutritious foods as well as the essential fatty acids (fatty fish, olive and coconut oils, avocados) and supplements prescribed by her doctor, otherwise child number two could miss on many of the advantages baby number one got.

If her diet is unbalanced or insufficient in soluble and insoluble fiber from fruits and vegetables, the mother should ask her doctor for probiotics to ease her digestive problems (nausea, acid reflux, constipation, diarrhea). Probiotics are the "good" intestinal bacteria, microflora, that protect our health and intestinal tract against pathogens, yeast infections, and diarrhea, which are a threat to the pregnancy. Healthy bacteria also help in nutrient synthesis and assimilation. They are endangered by the multiple uses of antibiotics, artificial sweeteners, drugs, and unhealthy eating. Yogurt rich in live cultures protects the intestinal "beneficial" bacteria.

Probiotics were shown in research to protect against vaginal infections (Candida, sexually transmitted diseases), bacteria, and elevated risk of preterm birth. Insist on them if you feel depleted of "good" bacteria. A good brand is important. Studies show that probiotics in the last trimester of the pregnancy could reduce the risk of the infant developing allergies (eczema, asthma).

According to Dr. Shanahan, even if mother's nutrition is not optimal, there is a chance that the first baby may be born healthy, proportionate, symmetrical, and well. After a first pregnancy deficient in essential nutrients, mother's body may become even more depleted and weak. Photographs show her spine to become curved, her lips thinner, her memory a little impaired, and her mental sharpness less acute in result of deficiencies and poor nutrition. She may even show anxiety and low moods diagnosed as postpartum depression.

Fetuses' inherent genes make them behave like scavengers to survive, absorbing whatever they need from the mother's body, even if it means depleting her reserves like a true parasite would, leaving her with an exhausted and weak constitution. Unless she nourishes herself with the appropriate nutrition, she will become weaker and weaker, not fit to produce a healthy second child. She would need to replenish her body with a nutrient rich diet and longterm comprehensive supplements.

A weak mother would be exposing her subsequent pregnancies to miscarriages or preterm deliveries and babies to significant health issues. Even if the fetus acts like a parasite, God does not intend to sacrifice the life of a mother in favor of her unborn. When the mother is too weak in her pregnancy, she may not be able to carry full-term. The other probability is that when the mother is weaker than she was in her first pregnancy, the second child will not be as fit or as attractive physically. That includes facial bone structure, trait development, and symmetry.

This is what happens to children in close succession (with short time span). They could have weaker constitutions (higher risk of disease); less attractive facial traits; lower intelligence quotient (IQ); and may have **birth defects** due to deficiencies. The first-born seems to reap all the benefits from a healthier and stronger mother.

Shanahan continues explaining that bone structure and skeletal and facial development are also controlled by a healthy genetic expression, which is influenced by sufficient amounts of vitamins, minerals, proteins, healthy essential fats, and other important nutrients. That is why the mother should be in top shape and should have a good break between pregnancies to replenish her body's stock of nutrients, keeping in mind that breastfeeding takes away a great deal of her vital nutrients. To start a second pregnancy, a mother needs to replace what has been depleted with the first born in order to have another healthy baby.

Next week, I will talk more about what Shanahan has in her book. It is amazing how a healthy natural nutrition is important to the health of parents-to-be, pregnancy, fetuses, and breastfeeding.

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Why mothers-to-be should be super healthy (Part 3)

**LOAD-DATE:** December 15, 2015

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** 9

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MailOnline

**December** 18, 2015 Friday 8:44 AM GMT

Hundreds of **birth defects** 'due to a lack of **folic acid':** More than 2,000 babies said to have died or been left disabled because ministers refused to accept nutritional advice  
  
**BYLINE:** BEN SPENCER MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR THE DAILY MAIL  
  
**SECTION:** HEALTH  
  
**LENGTH:** 856 words

* Scientists have repeatedly asked the Government to add **folic acid** to flour
* Defects of the brain, spine or spinal cord are not decreasing in the UK
* Pregnant women need 400 micrograms a day for the first three months
* 85% of British women aged 16 to 49 have low **folic acid** levels

More than 2,000 babies have died or suffered a disability because of ministers' refusal to adopt expert nutritional advice on **folic acid**, experts have warned.

Scientists have repeatedly advised the Government to ensure food companies add **folic acid** to flour, a measure they say reduces the risk of children being born with serious defects such as **spina** **bifida**.

Now researchers at six British universities have calculated that 2,000 pregnancies associated with major defects would have been avoided since 1998 if Ministers had taken the advice.

These cases - around 150 a year - would never have happened had the UK followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to flour, they said.

Scroll down for video

Rates of **neural tube** **defects** - **birth defects** of the brain, spine or spinal cord - are not falling across the UK, resulting in the death of the fetus or newborn baby, or life-long disability in those who survive.

Experts on the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition wrote to ministers in October expressing their concern that recommendations made in 2000, 2006 and 2009 to improve levels of **folic acid** intake had still not been taken on board.

Ministers are thought to have stalled on implementing the health measure because they feared a backlash over what some might describe as the mass medication of the population.

The NHS advises that most people should be able to obtain the recommended dose of **folic acid** from a balanced diet alone, but women are advised to take 400 micrograms of **folic acid** daily whilst trying to conceive and for the first three months of pregnancy.

However, the official figures show 85 per cent of British women aged 16 to 49 have low **folic acid** levels.

And further research has found that more than 70 per cent of women do not take supplements regularly or early enough in pregnancy.

In the US, fortifying flour with **folic acid** has led to a 23 per cent reduction in **neural tube** **defects**.

The new research, published in the Archives of Disease in Childhood journal, estimates the number of defects that could have been avoided if the UK had adopted a flour fortification policy in 1998, the same year the US adopted the policy.

Researchers said 2,014 cases of defects in pregnancy could have been prevented - equivalent to a 21 per cent drop in cases.

Many of these women would have decided to terminate the pregnancy, the researchers said.

But assuming there had been no terminations, around half of babies would have died during the pregnancy.

The other half - about 1,000 - would have either been aborted or born disabled, they calculated.

The authors are from the universities of Queen Mary in London, Oxford, Newcastle, Bristol, Leicester and Southampton, as well as Public Health England and Public Health Wales.

They wrote: 'Our results show that in the UK between 1998 and 2012, there was little, if any, change in the prevalence of pregnancies with a **neural tube** **defect**, while in the US, quickly following the introduction of mandatory fortification of flour with **folic acid** in 1998, there was an approximate 23 per cent reduction in the occurrence of affected births.

'The failure of Britain to fortify flour with **folic acid** has had significant consequences.'

They compared the situation with thalidomide, which resulted in the births of 500 people with disabilities in the UK.

'Justifiably, steps were introduced to immediately halt the epidemic, and regulatory precautions were introduced to avoid another similar epidemic,' the academics wrote.

'Unfortunately, no such sense of urgency has been applied to the prevention of **spina** **bifida**.

'It is a public health failure that Britain has not implemented the fortification of flour with **folic acid** for the prevention of **spina** **bifida**and other [**neural tube** **defects**].'

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at Public Health England, said: 'Implementing the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's advice to add **folic acid** to flour would reduce the risk of **birth defects**, such as **spina** **bifida**, in pregnancy.

'Public Health England's analysis shows that 85 per cent of 16 to 49-year-old women have **folic acid** levels below the new World Health Organisation recommendation for women entering pregnancy.

'This highlights the importance for pregnant women, and those trying or likely to get pregnant, of taking a daily **folic acid** supplement of 400 micrograms - before and up to the 12th week of pregnancy.'

The charity Shine, which supports thousands of families affected by **spina** **bifida** and hydrocephalus, has been lobbying for **folic acid** to be added to food for more than a decade.

It believes ministers have failed to take action because they fear it would be unpopular with voters.

A Department of Health spokesman said: 'The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition submitted recommendations to Government around **folic acid** and bread in October. We are currently considering these.'

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mirror.co.uk

**December** 18, 2015 Friday 12:29 AM GMT

Over 2,000 babies suffered serious defects 'due to Government's failure to add **folic acid to flour'**;   
Around 150 cases a year since 1998 could have been avoided if the UK had followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to **flour,** researchers said  
  
**BYLINE:** By Andrew Gregory  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS,UK NEWS  
  
**LENGTH:** 692 words

More than 2,000 babies have suffered serious defects due to the Government's failure to add **folic acid** to **flour**, a damning report warns.

Around 150 cases a year since 1998 could have been avoided if the UK had followed 78 other countries and added the key vitamin to**flour**, researchers said.

Rates of neural tube defects - **birth defects** of the brain, spine or spinal cord - are not falling across the UK, resulting in death of the foetus or newborn baby, or life-long disability in those who survive.

Last month Government advisers wrote to ministers expressing their concern that recommendations made in 2000, 2006 and 2009 to improve levels of **folic acid** intake had still not been taken on board.

Members of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) pointed to a rising number of abortions in England and Wales for neural tube defects, with 420 in 2013, up from 390 in 2012 and 299 in 2009.

Women are urged to take 400mcg of **folic acid** daily whilst trying to conceive and for the first three months of pregnancy to cut the chance of neural tube defects, which include spina bifida and anencephaly.

But research has found that over 70% of women do not take the supplements regularly or early enough in pregnancy.

In the US, fortifying **flour** with **folic acid** has led to a 23% reduction in neural tube defects.

The new research, published online in the Archives of Disease in Childhood, estimates the number of defects that could have been avoided if the UK had adopted a **flour** fortification policy in 1998, the same year the US adopted the policy.

Researchers said 2,014 cases of defects could have been prevented - equivalent to a 21% drop in cases. They said asking women to take supplements was not working and that fortifying **flour** was "remarkably safe".

They said: "Our results show that in the UK between 1998 and 2012, there was little, if any, change in the prevalence of pregnancies with a neural tube defect, while in the USA, quickly following the introduction of mandatory fortification of **flour** with **folic acid** in 1998, there was an approximate 23% reduction in the occurrence of affected births.

"Given the evidence from the Medical Research Council Vitamin Study regarding the efficacy of **folic acid** in preventing neural tube defects, the failure of Britain to fortify **flour** with **folic acid** has had significant consequences.

"The recent evidence that only 28% of pregnant women in England in 2012 took **folic acid** supplements at the correct time indicates that, in practice, recommending **folic acid** supplementation is largely ineffective."

From 1998 to 2012, some 1.28 pregnancies per 1,000 births were affected by a neural tube defect, of which 81% resulted in an abortion.

The research was carried out by experts including from Queen Mary University London, Public Health England (PHE) and Oxford University.

They compared the situation with thalidomide, which resulted in the births of 500 people with disabilities in the UK.

"Justifiably, steps were introduced to immediately halt the epidemic, and regulatory precautions were introduced to avoid another similar epidemic," they said. "Unfortunately, no such sense of urgency has been applied to the prevention of spina bifida.

"It is a public health failure that Britain has not implemented the fortification of **flour** with **folic acid** for the prevention of spina bifida and other (neural tube defects)."

They said this failure "has caused, and continues to cause, avoidable terminations of pregnancy, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and permanent serious disability in surviving children".

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at Public Health England, said: "Implementing the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's advice to add **folic acid** to **flour** would reduce the risk of **birth defects**, such as spina bifida, in pregnancy.

"PHE's analysis shows that 85% of 16 to 49-year-old women have **folic acid** levels below the new World Health Organisation recommendation for women entering pregnancy.

"This highlights the importance for pregnant women, and those trying or likely to get pregnant, of taking a daily **folic acid** supplement of 400 micrograms - before and up to the 12th week of pregnancy."

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The Times (London)

**December** 18, 2015 Friday   
Edition 1;   
Scotland

Help for healthy babies  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 18  
  
**LENGTH:** 57 words

The government's failure to follow 78 countries and add **folic acid** to flour has caused serious defects, including **spina bifida,** in about 150 babies a year, according to members of the scientific advisory committee on nutrition. Pregnant women are advised to take **folic acid** to reduce the risk of **neural tube defects,** but many do not take enough.

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The Times (London)

**December** 18, 2015 Friday   
Edition 2;   
National Edition

Help for healthy babies The [...]  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 16  
  
**LENGTH:** 61 words

Help for healthy babies The government's failure to follow 78 countries and add **folic acid** to flour has caused serious defects, including**spina bifida,** in about 150 babies a year, according to members of the scientific advisory committee on nutrition. Pregnant women are advised to take **folic acid** to reduce the risk of **neural tube defects,** but many do not take enough.