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