



Information on folic acid supplementation before and during pregnancy

NHS Health Scotland recently launched an updated z card resource with information on folic acid before and during pregnancy – available [here](#). This resource gives basic information on folate from foods, folic acid from supplements or fortified food products and recommendations on intake for women before pregnancy and up to their 12th week of pregnancy.

These recommendations are:

- 400 mcg supplement to be taken before conception and up to the 12th week of pregnancy¹
-

In the following groups a 5mg supplement (only available on prescription) is recommended both before conception and up to the 12th week of pregnancy:

- if there has been a previous pregnancy affected by a neural tube defect or if there is a family history of neural tube defects¹
- All women with epilepsy²
- All women with diabetes²

If women have a BMI >30, we have not recommended that they take a 5mg supplement. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) subgroup on Maternal and Child Nutrition recently reviewed the evidence for this and concluded that, while there was evidence that women with BMI >30 may have an increased risk of an NTD-affected birth, there is insufficient evidence for the effectiveness of a high dose folic acid supplement in reducing the risk of deficiency in obese women³. Boards can make a decision on this locally, however our resources will align with SACN, and will not include this recommendation.

The CMACE/RCOG Joint Guideline Management of Women with Obesity in Pregnancy⁴ and consequently Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition: A Framework for Action⁵ recommended a 5mg folic acid supplement for women with BMI >30 before SACN published this information. SACN have informed the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of their decision and RCOG are currently considering this submission.

To order free copies of the NHS Health Scotland folic acid resource, please contact nhs.healthscotland-publications@nhs.net.

For further information please contact Katie Baird, Senior Health Improvement Programme Officer (Maternal & Infant Nutrition) – katie.baird@nhs.net.

¹ Folate and Disease Prevention. Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, 2006.

http://www.sacn.gov.uk/reports_position_statements/reports/report_on_folate_and_disease_prevention.html

² Management of Diabetes, Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network, 2010.

<http://www.sign.ac.uk/pdf/sign116.pdf>

³ Minutes of 14th meeting of the Subgroup on Maternal and Child Nutrition, Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, 8th September 2010.

<http://www.sacn.gov.uk/pdfs/DRAFT%20SMCN%20minutes%208th%20September%202010%20v4.pdf>

⁴ Management of Women with Obesity in Pregnancy. CMACE/RCOG Joint Guideline, 2010.

<http://www.rcog.org.uk/files/rcog-corp/CMACERCOGJointGuidelineManagementWomenObesityPregnancya.pdf>

⁵ Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition: A Framework for Action, Scottish Government, 2011.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/01/13095228/0>