
FOLATE & IRON

Nutrients of concern for women who could become pregnant

Iron and You:

Iron is a mineral that is key to healthy growth, connective tissue maintenance, and cell function. Unfortunately, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans have revealed that “Substantial numbers of women who are capable of becoming pregnant, including adolescent girls, are deficient in iron.”

There are two types of iron: heme and non-heme. You can find heme iron in lean meat, poultry, and seafood. Non-heme iron is part of lentils, spinach, and beans. Whole grains and enriched grain foods contain iron too. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that “Women capable of becoming pregnant [should choose] foods that supply heme iron [...], additional iron sources, and enhancers of iron absorption such as vitamin C-rich foods.”

Let’s Talk About Folate:

Folate is a B vitamin, and the man-made form of it is called folic acid. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, “many women capable of becoming pregnant still do not meet the recommended intake for folic acid.”

Folate and folic acid help prevent neural tube defects, contributing significantly to the health of a baby during the early stages of pregnancy. Neural tube defects develop during the first month of pregnancy, which is why folate is so important for all women who are capable of becoming pregnant. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that women in this group consume 400 mcg of folic acid daily, while pregnant women should get 600 mcg of folate each day.

