



**30th October 2007**

## **HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS INFORMATION SERVICE (HSIS) COMMENTS ON THE BENEFITS OF FOLIC ACID**

In response to a study published in the British Journal of Nutrition (issue 98.4; October) which looks at Folic Acid and its metabolism in the liver, the Health Supplements Information Service (HSIS) would like to reiterate:

- the benefits of folic acid in the maintenance of good health
- the vital role it has played, and continues to, for many pregnant women around the world with reference to reducing the risk of neural tube defects.

Commenting further on the benefits of folic acid and nutrient supplementation, Pamela Mason from the Health Supplements Information Service notes: “It is essential to highlight that there are numerous studies that demonstrate the fact that vitamin and mineral supplements can help bridge the nutritional gap for many people in the UK whose diets are often lacking in essential nutrients.”

“Taking folic acid regularly can help prevent a number of diseases, particularly some cancers, cardiovascular disease and depression. Folic acid is used in our bodies to make new cells and is essential for the health of all body cells, including the heart and nervous system.”

“The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) showed that 11% of men and 30% of women had folic acid intake below the RNI. In fact, women who are looking to become pregnant are advised to increase their daily intake to 400mcg. The NDNS Survey revealed further that 86% of women aged 19-24 have intakes below 400mcg; 92% of women aged 25-34 and 84% of women aged 35-49 have intakes less than 400mcg. Folic acid supplementation can help to make good this dietary gap.”

“Folic Acid is an essential B vitamin which is of enormous benefit in reducing the risk of neural tube defects<sup>1</sup>, and it is particularly worrying that would be mothers might not take Folic Acid if they think there is any risk.”

**-ends-**

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<sup>1</sup> In the developing human embryo the neural tube is the precursor of the central nervous system which comprises the brain and spinal cord. The closure of the neural tube usually occurs around the 30<sup>th</sup> day after fertilisation but if the tube fails to close properly, a neural tube defect will occur. Among the most common defects are anencephaly, encephalocele and spina bifida.