

FOOD SOURCES: FOLATE

Folate is a water-soluble B vitamin that occurs naturally in food. Folic acid is the synthetic form of folate that is found in some supplements and most fortified foods. Leafy green vegetables (e.g., spinach and kale), citrus fruits, and legumes are all natural sources of folate.

Folate helps the body produce and maintain new cells. This is especially important during periods of rapid growth and cell division, such as infancy and pregnancy.¹ Folate is needed to make new DNA and also helps prevent damage to DNA that may lead to cancer. Both adults and children need folate to make normal red blood cells and prevent anemia. Folate is essential for the metabolism of homocysteine, an amino acid that in high amounts may contribute to heart disease, dementia, and depression.^{1 2}

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for folate is expressed as dietary folate equivalents, or DFEs to reflect a higher bioavailability of folic acid compared to natural folate from food.² Some individuals, like those with genetic variants in MTHFR, may respond better to natural folate versus folic acid.¹ Talk to your Functional Medicine practitioner if you have questions or concerns about your folate intake.

The RDA for Folate is as follows:

- **All adults, ages 19+:** 400 mcg DFE
- **Pregnancy:** 600 mcg DFE
- **Lactation:** 500 mcg DFE

Food, standard serving size	Average DFE (in micrograms)
Organic, grass-fed beef liver, 3 ounces	215 mcg
Lentils, ½ cup cooked	180 mcg
Pinto beans, ½ cup	145 mcg
Garbanzo beans, ½ cup	140 mcg
Asparagus, 6 spears	134 mcg
Spinach, ½ cup	130 mcg
Black-eyed peas, ½ cup	105 mcg
Fortified cereal (25% of DV), 1 serving	100 mcg
Brussels sprouts, ½ cup	80 mcg
Beets, ½ cup	68 mcg
Romaine lettuce, 1 cup	64 mcg
Avocado, ½ cup	60 mcg
Broccoli, ½ cup	50-60 mcg
Orange, 1 medium	40 mcg

References

1. Oregon State University, Linus Pauling Institute. Micronutrient Information Center. Folate. <https://lpi.oregonstate.edu/mic/vitamins/folate>. Updated June 2014. Accessed March 18, 2020.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements. Folate. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Folate-HealthProfessional>. Updated March 11, 2020. Accessed March 18, 2020.
3. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. FoodData Central. fdc.nal.usda.gov. Accessed March 23, 2020.

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