

Health Awareness



Spina Bifida: What You Should Know

(NAPSA)—Research may mean good news for future generations: Many birth defects such as spina bifida may be preventable.



To help reduce the risk of birth defects, all women of childbearing age should take the B-vitamin folic acid every day.

Spina bifida is a life-long birth defect in which the spine has not closed completely. Although each case is different, paralysis of the legs, limited bowel and bladder function, and latex allergies are typically involved. The exact cause of spina bifida is not known, however genetics and environmental factors are involved. Spina bifida occurs during the first month of pregnancy, often before a woman knows she's pregnant.

Recent scientific studies show that daily consumption of the B-vitamin folic acid prior to pregnancy reduces the risk of spina bifida up to 70 percent. Folic acid helps build healthy cells. All women of childbearing age should take a vitamin with folic acid every day, according to the Spina Bifida Association of America (SBAA). In addition to dietary supplements, folic acid is found in dark green vegetables, oranges and fortified breads and cereals.

To learn more about spina bifida, call SBAA at 1-800-621-3141 or visit www.sbaa.org.