



City and County of San Francisco
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FEW U.S. WOMEN GET RECOMMENDED AMOUNT OF FOLIC ACID

Go Folic! Project Distributes Free Vitamins

San Francisco, CA – By taking the B-vitamin folic acid at least three months before pregnancy, women can reduce their risk for having a baby with a neural tube defect (NTD) by 70%. Since half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control wants all reproductive age women to take a daily multivitamin with at least 400 mcg of folic acid, whether or not they are planning to get pregnant. Alarming, nearly 2/3 of women in the U.S. do not follow this recommendation.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health's Go Folic! Project (www.gofolic.org) wants to change this statistic and is encouraging women to start the New Year by taking a daily multivitamin with the recommended amount of folic acid. To make it easy for women to follow this New Year's advice, Go Folic! is providing reproductive-age women with a *free* three-month supply of Go Folic! Multis, a daily multi-vitamin that contains 100% of the RDA for all vitamins, including folic acid. This give-away is part of the project's observance of National Folic Acid Awareness Week (NFAAW), January 6-12, 2013. Vitamin giveaways will take place during normal business hours at the following sites:

- DPH Youth clinics (<http://www.sfdph.org/dph/comupg/oprograms/MCH/CHPY.asp>);
- Healthy San Francisco, the City's health care access program (new enrollees only) of folic acid <http://www.healthysanfrancisco.org/>;
- Women between the ages 14-54 *who are not clients at DPH clinics* can pick up a free bottle of Go Folic! Multis at the Go Folic! Office, 30 Van Ness Avenue @ Market, Suite 260, San Francisco, CA 94102.

Other NFAAW observances include a daily blog post at www.gofolic.wordpress.com and a twitter feed (www.twitter.com/gofolic) highlighting NFAAW events in other parts of the state and nation.

Barbara A. Garcia, Director of Health, said, "Folic acid supplementation saves public health dollars at a cost of only pennies per day. When you consider that the annual health care cost for a child born with a neural tube defect is nearly \$300,000, this is a prevention program that is good for everyone."

The mission of the San Francisco Department of Public Health is to protect and promote the health of all San Franciscans.
We shall ~ Assess and research the health of the community ~ Develop and enforce health policy ~ Prevent disease and injury ~
~ Educate the public and train health care providers ~ Provide quality, comprehensive, culturally-proficient health services ~ Ensure equal access to all

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The value of free vitamins was reinforced by “Deborah,” a recently- unemployed client who received Go Folic! Multi-Vitamins during the 2012 NFAAW give-away. “I have always taken multi-vitamins but could no longer afford to buy them,” Deborah reported. “I was thrilled that I could get help getting them. Unfortunately, food stamps do not cover vitamins.”

According to Shivaun Nestor, Go Folic! Project Coordinator, “Folic acid plays a crucial role in healthy cell division and growth, and may decrease a woman’s risk for certain cancers and help her body’s ability to handle stress. It can be viewed as ‘beauty from the inside out’ because it improves the quality of a woman’s hair, skin and nails. Research has shown that it may also reduce the risk for pre-term labor, a serious problem for San Francisco mothers, and for other birth defects such as cleft palate.”

Michael Baxter, Director of the DPH Family Planning Program and Community Health Programs for Youth, states, “Teenage and adult women need at least 400 mcg of folic acid daily and that it can be difficult since the body only absorbs about 50% of the folate a woman gets from food. That’s why health experts recommend taking a daily multi-vitamin with the RDA for folic acid. Good supplements can be expensive so it’s wonderful to be able to offer a good multi-vitamin formula to our clients for free.”

The Go Folic! Women’s Nutrition Project is a project of the DPH Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Section, the mission of which is to promote the health and well-being of women of childbearing age, infants, children and adolescents who are at increased risk of adverse health outcomes by virtue of financial, language or cultural barriers. For more information about the Go Folic! Women’s Nutrition Project, go to <http://www.gofolic.org>.

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