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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SF HEALTH NETWORK KICKS OFF NEW YEAR BY GOING FOLIC!

Health Department Clinics Celebrate National *Folic Acid Awareness Week*

SAN FRANCISCO— It's New Year's resolution time again. What easier resolution can young women make than to take a multi-vitamin with folic acid? National Folic Acid Awareness Week is January 4 to 11, and the San Francisco Department of Public Health's San Francisco Health Network, in collaboration with its Family Planning Program, is excited to bring back the buzz about the importance of folic acid by distributing free vitamins to SF Health Network clients!

Starting Monday January 5 through Friday January 9, clinics within the San Francisco Health Network will be giving all female clients between the ages of 13 to 44 a free three-month supply of multi-vitamins containing 100 percent of the daily folic acid requirement. The vitamins, along with educational materials in English, Chinese and Spanish will be packaged in Go Folic! cosmetic bags.

Women who are not clients of a San Francisco Health Network clinic will be able to pick up a bottle of free vitamins at the Go Folic! office at 30 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 260, in San Francisco.

The San Francisco Health Network (SFHN) is operated by the San Francisco Department of Public Health. It is the city's only complete system of care and includes San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (SFGH) with UCSF physicians providing hospital care, specialty, diagnostic and ancillary services. SFHN also includes Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center, primary care clinics in the community, and a comprehensive range of substance abuse and mental health services. <http://www.sfhealthnetwork.org/>

Folic acid is an important B vitamin (B-9) that is necessary for proper cell division and growth; taking folic acid *before* pregnancy reduces by 70 percent the risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect. A study published in the July 2014 issue of the medical journal, *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, also found that a higher intake of folic acid supplements before and during the early stages of pregnancy was associated with a reduced risk of miscarriage. Other studies have found an association between folic acid supplementation and lower rates of stillbirth(s) and early pre-term labor.



Providing folic acid to SFHN clients is part of our commitment to excellence in primary, prenatal and obstetrics services. Network patients give birth at San Francisco General Hospital, which exceeds national quality standards for labor and delivery. The hospital is highly rated in the California Hospital Assessment and Reporting Taskforce (CHART) recent analysis of four measures of maternity care — C-section rates, episiotomy rates, rates of exclusive breastfeeding before discharge, and VBAC (vaginal birth after C-section) rates.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Preventive Services Task Force recommend that all reproductive age women take a daily multi-vitamin with between 400 – 800 mcg of folic acid. This is important since approximately half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended. Adequate intake of folic acid may have additional benefits for women, including those not planning to get pregnant. These include a lower risk of breast, cervical and colon cancers and healthier hair, skin and nails, making folic acid a natural source of “beauty from the inside out.”

“Even women whose diets are healthy can find it difficult to get the recommended 400-800 mcg of folate from food alone,” said Shivaun Nestor, Interim Coordinator of Family Planning Services for SFDPH. “The body only absorbs about 50 percent of the folate a woman gets from food, but 100 percent of the folic acid in a multi-vitamin. That’s one of the reasons that health experts recommend taking a supplement.”

The clinics participating in this Folic Acid Awareness Week event are Castro Mission Health Center, Chinatown Public Health Center, Balboa Teen Health Center, Cole Street Youth Clinic, Larkin Street Youth Clinic, Maxine Hall Health Center, Ocean Park Health Center, Potrero Hill Health Center, and Silver Avenue Family Health Center. Also participating are three primary care clinics on the San Francisco General Hospital Campus: Family Health Center, the General Medicine Clinic and the Women’s Health Clinic.

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The SF Health Network (<http://www.sfhealthnetwork.org>) is the city’s only complete system of care, providing primary and specialty care, pediatrics, hospital, emergency and trauma care, dentistry, diagnostic testing, skilled nursing and rehabilitation, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. The New York Times in May 2014 named the Network’s birth center at San Francisco General Hospital as the safest place to have a baby in California.

Go Folic! (<http://www.gofolic.org>) is a project of the San Francisco Department of Public Health’s Family Planning Program and its Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Section, the mission of which is to promote health and well-being of the City’s women of childbearing age, infants, children and adolescents.

More information on folic acid at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/about.html>.