



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Francisco Health Network to Give Away 3-Month Supply of Multi-Vitamins

Health Department Clinics Celebrate National *Folic Acid Awareness Week*

San Francisco, CA — The San Francisco Department of Public Health's San Francisco Health Network, in collaboration with its Family Planning Program, is giving away free gift bags of multi-vitamins with folic acid as part of National Folic Acid Awareness Week. Starting Monday January 25 through Friday January 29, clinics within the San Francisco Health Network (SFHN) will be giving all female clients between the ages of 14 to 54 a free three-month supply of multi-vitamins containing 100 percent of the daily folic acid requirement.

Women who are not clients of a San Francisco Health Network clinic will be able to pick up a bottle of free vitamins at 30 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 260b, in San Francisco. Or to find a location near you, call the local Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health hotline at 1-800-300-9950.

Folic acid is an important B vitamin (B-9) that is necessary for proper cell division and growth; taking folic acid *before* pregnancy reduces 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.

"Not only does folic acid give you beautiful hair, skin, and nails, but all women of childbearing age (14 to 54 years of age) should take 400 mcg of folic acid daily to prevent birth defects for future pregnancies. Folic acid can help reduce the risk of brain and spinal defects to the baby by up to 70%." Said Shivaun Nestor, Director of Family Planning and Preconception Health.

"Nearly half of all pregnancies in California are unplanned, which makes taking a multi-vitamin with folic acid especially important whether or not you are actively trying to get pregnant," states Annelise Goldberg, Medical Consultant to Family Planning and Preconception Health. "This is why we're so excited to be able to give away free multi-vitamins during Folic Acid Awareness Week."

Providing folic acid to SFHN clients is part of our commitment to excellence in primary, prenatal and obstetrics services. Network patients give birth at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (ZSFG), 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 best way to get the daily requirement of folate, the natural form of folic acid found in fruits and vegetables, is to eat a variety of foods high in folate, such as dried beans and peas, dark green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits and fortified grain products,” explains Magdalene Louie, MS, RD, WIC Program Coordinator. “To ensure women of childbearing age receive adequate amount of folate in their diet, it will be beneficial to take a daily multi-vitamin with folic acid.”

The clinics participating in this Folic Acid Awareness Week are Ocean Park Health Center, Cole Street Youth Clinic, Potrero Hill Health Center, Maxine Hall Health Center, Balboa Teen Health Center, 3rd Street Clinic, Castro-Mission Health Center, Larkin Street Medical Clinic, Silver Avenue Family Health Center, Southeast Health Center, Chinatown Public Health Center, Family Health Center at ZSFG, WIC 30 Van Ness and WIC ZSFG.

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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 Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center 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>.