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Folic acid use in women of childbearing age

Lisa Quinn and Karen Lumia
Gannon University, USA

The initial CDC recommendation specific to folic acid was made in 1992. Following decades of intense scrutiny on the relationship between vitamin intake and neural tube defects, the U.S. Public Health Service made the following recommendation: “All women of childbearing age in the United States who are capable of becoming pregnant should consume 400µcg of folic acid per day; for the purpose of reducing the risk of having a pregnancy affected with spina bifida and other neural tube defects” (CDC, 1992).

Despite increased media campaigns and ongoing educational programs, many women still do not begin taking a folic acid supplement prior to conception. Similar to other relationships between health knowledge and health behavior, there is a gap between awareness of the importance of folic acid supplementation and folic acid use. Specifically, knowledge and awareness of folic acid supplementation does not always guarantee folic acid use prior to conception.

Recent literature provides evidence that a majority of women of childbearing age still do not take a daily multivitamin supplemented with the recommended 400µcg of folic acid. It is vital to the health of women and their offspring that health care and health promotion professionals identify the most effective strategies for promoting optimal health for this population. A message of daily multivitamin intake for all women initiated by health care providers and reinforced by people in the woman's support system may be one such strategy. Other strategies supported by this research include identifying creative ways to change a woman's attitude about multivitamin use.

Biography

Lisa Quinn is a 2007 Graduate of Kent State University with a PhD in Health Education/Promotion. She is currently on faculty at Gannon University in Erie Pennsylvania. She teaches both undergraduate, graduate and DNP students. She holds certification as a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner.

Karen Lumia is a 1982 Graduate of University of Buffalo with an MS in Child Health Nursing with a minor in Endocrine Disorders. She is currently on Faculty at Gannon University in Erie Pennsylvania. She teaches Pediatrics to the Undergraduate Students, Test Taking Skills for NCLEX SUCCESS and Nurse Power Politics.

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