

## PHYSICIAN ALERT

Since 1992, it has been well documented that neural tube defects (spina bifida, anencephaly, and encephalocele) can be prevented with folic acid supplementation to the diet. The supplement must begin before trying to become pregnant and continue during the early months of pregnancy. Folic acid may be obtained through certain multivitamins, prenatal vitamins, and as folate alone.



This prevention strategy is of particular importance in South Carolina as our state is a high-risk state for these types of birth defects. In 1992, the recommendation for all women of childbearing age – was daily use of a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid. And 4 mg/day is the dose recommended by the CDC for high risk pregnancies (those with a prior infant affected with an NTD).

**In 2021, the Neural Tube Defect Prevention Program at the Greenwood Genetic Center proposed that the standard preventive dose of folic acid for all women of childbearing age in South Carolina be increased to 4 mg/day during the 3 months prior to conception and the first month after conception.**

The increased dose should be used with 2 caveats:

1. The folic acid should be prescribed as folic acid alone rather than by increasing the number of multivitamins as the dose of other vitamins may become excessive. This increased dose of folic acid may be used in addition to a single multivitamin with 0.4 mg folic acid per day.
2. If any side effects should occur, discontinue the 4 mg/day dose and return to the multivitamin with only 0.4 mg/day or prenatal vitamin with 0.8 mg/day alone.



## Governor Declares January 2024 as Birth Defects Awareness Month

January 2024 has been designated by Governor Henry McMaster as Birth Defects Awareness Month in South Carolina.

As part of Birth Defects Awareness Month, billboards have been placed throughout South Carolina in an effort to increase awareness about the importance of taking a multivitamin containing folic acid to prevent birth defects of the brain and spine.

The message will be continued throughout the year through public lectures, science courses, press releases, and exhibits.

# Greenwood Genetic Center

101 Gregor Mendel Circle

Greenwood, SC 29646

Thinking about having a baby?

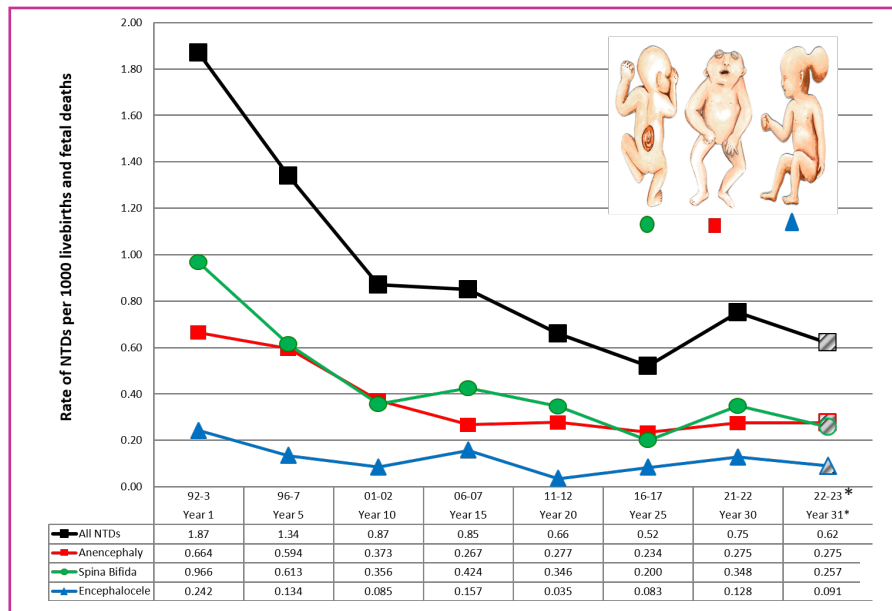


SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs • SC Department of Health and Environmental Control • Greenwood Genetic Center

You need more **FOLIC ACID** than you think!

Call your doctor today or contact the SC Birth Defects Prevention Program  
1-800-6-SOMEDAY

## Neural Tube Defects in South Carolina (1992-2023)



### NTDs in SC During Project Year 31

(October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023)

#### Cases by type of NTD:

Spina bifida	16 (46%)
Anencephaly	14 (40%)
Encephalocele	5 (14%)

#### Detection method:

Ultrasound	31
Delivery	3
Prenatal Cell Free DNA	1

#### Geographic distribution:

Region I (Piedmont)	9
Region II (Midlands)	10
Region III (Coastal)	16

\*Year 31 data is preliminary pending final review

### Contact Us:

Staff members at the office of the South Carolina Birth Defects Prevention Program will be happy to assist your office in any way to assure that your patients have information regarding prevention of these serious birth defects. We now have literature on NTDs and NTD prevention available in English and Spanish.

Dietary recommendations with foods that are high in folic acid, along with examples of menus using this information has proven to be a very helpful tool especially with Hispanic communities. **FREE** multivitamins are also available to all physician offices and women of childbearing age.

Jane H. Dean, RN

Statewide Program Coordinator

1-800-676-6332 or (864) 941-8138 or jane@ggc.org

Contributions to support the SC Birth Defects Prevention Program may be made through the Greenwood Genetic Center Foundation at [www.ggc.org/foundation](http://www.ggc.org/foundation) or (864) 388-1813.