

Food Sources:

Folate

Folate is a water-soluble B vitamin that occurs naturally in food. Folic acid is the synthetic form of folate that is found in some supplements and most fortified foods. Leafy green vegetables (e.g., spinach and kale), citrus fruits, and legumes are all natural sources of folate.

Folate helps the body produce and maintain new cells. This is especially important during rapid growth and cell division, such as infancy and pregnancy.¹ Folate is needed to make new DNA and helps prevent damage to DNA that may lead to cancer. Adults and children need folate to make normal red blood cells and prevent anemia. Folate is also essential for the metabolism of homocysteine, an amino acid that in high amounts may contribute to heart disease, dementia, and depression.^{1,2}

The RDAs for folate are expressed as dietary folate equivalents (DFEs) to reflect a higher bioavailability of folic acid compared to natural folate from food.² Some individuals, like those with genetic variants in MTHFR, may respond better to natural folate than folic acid.¹ Talk to your functional medicine practitioner if you have questions or concerns about your folate intake.

The Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for folate are as follows:

- **Adults, ages 19+:** 400 micrograms (mcg) DFE per day
- **Pregnancy:** 600 mcg DFE per day
- **Lactation:** 500 mcg DFE per day

Food, Standard Serving Size	Average DFE Content (in micrograms)
Organic, grass-fed beef liver (cooked), 3 ounces	215
Lentils (cooked), ½ cup	180
Pinto beans (cooked), ½ cup	145
Garbanzo beans (cooked), ½ cup	140
Asparagus (cooked), 6 spears	134
Spinach (cooked), ½ cup	130
Black-eyed peas (cooked), ½ cup	105
Cereal, fortified to 25% of Daily Value, 1 serving	100
Brussels sprouts (cooked), ½ cup	80
Beets (cooked), ½ cup	68
Romaine lettuce, 1 cup	64
Avocado, ½ cup	60
Broccoli (cooked), ½ cup	50-60
Orange, 1 medium	40

REFERENCES

1. Oregon State University, Linus Pauling Institute. Micronutrient Information Center. Folate. <https://lpi.oregonstate.edu/mic/vitamins/folate>. Updated June 2014. Accessed March 18, 2020.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements. Folate. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Folate-HealthProfessional>. Updated March 11, 2020. Accessed March 18, 2020.
3. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. FoodData Central. <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/>. Accessed March 23, 2020.

