



## Folic Acid Use Among Florida Women, 2000-2001

Each year in the United States, 2,500 to 3,000 infants are born with neural tube defects (NTD's), such as spina bifida or anencephaly, caused by the incomplete closing of the spine and skull. The CDC estimates that 50 percent to 70 percent of these birth defects could be prevented if all women of child-bearing age were consuming 0.4 mg of folic acid per day before and during early pregnancy. Florida PRAMS collects information on folic acid knowledge and consumption among new mothers.

According to Florida PRAMS 2000 and 2001 survey data, 78.0 percent of new mothers in Florida were aware that taking folic acid can help prevent some birth defects. However, among women who were thus aware of the benefits of taking folic acid, only 44.0 percent consumed a vitamin supplement containing folic acid during the month before becoming pregnant. The prevalence of consuming folic acid during the month before pregnancy among women who were aware of the benefits of taking folic acid was:

- The highest among non-Hispanic White women (51.4 percent); 37.0 percent among non-Hispanic Black women, and 31.3 percent among Hispanic women.
- Higher among women age 25 and older. In particular, 59.2 percent among women age 35 and older, 51.1 percent among those age 25 to 34; 25.9 percent among women age 24 and younger.
- The highest among women with more than a high school education (56.0 percent); 34.7 percent among those with a high school education, and 24.0 percent among those with less than a high school education.
- Higher as household incomes increased. In particular, 28.1 percent among women with incomes of \$15,600 or less, 42.3 percent among those with incomes between \$15,601 and \$39,600, and 61.1 percent among women with incomes of \$39,601 or more.
- Lower among Medicaid recipients (26.3 percent) than among non-Medicaid recipients (54.2 percent).
- Higher among women who were married (51.5 percent) than among those who were not married (28.0 percent).

This study describes the demographic characteristics of women, aware of the benefits of taking folic acid, who consumed a multi-vitamin supplement containing folic acid during the month before becoming pregnant. Taking folic acid during the month before pregnancy among women who are aware of the benefits of taking folic acid is less likely to occur among women who are non-Hispanic Blacks or Hispanics, are age 24 and younger, have lower levels of education or household income, are Medicaid recipients, and/or are unmarried. Findings from PRAMS data may assist healthcare providers and program planners in Florida to provide women of child-bearing age with effective information for reducing the prevalence of neural tube birth defects.

The Florida Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) is a random survey of recent mothers of live-born infants. It is designed to monitor the physical, economic, and social health of Florida mothers and newborns. PRAMS data are "weighted" so that the resulting estimates can be generalized to the entire state population. PRAMS data from 2000 and 2001 were combined to increase sample size and precision of estimates for this study.

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