

## NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FOLIC ACID

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**4 page fax to Lisa Erspamer**

Lisa Erspamer  
Executive Producer  
Oprah Winfrey Show  
110 N. Carpenter St  
Chicago, IL 60607

Via fax (312) 633-1976 and email [lerspamer@harpo.com](mailto:lerspamer@harpo.com)

Dear Ms. Erspamer:

We wanted to thank you for responding to our letter and mentioning folic acid during Oprah's "BestLife Week" webisode on January 13. We believe that Oprah and Dr. Oz opened the door for future discussion about the role of this important vitamin. However, our members are still concerned that it was not addressed adequately or clearly and that the information on your web page still includes the message that all "enriched" foods should be avoided. We need to ensure that women of childbearing age get the folic acid every day, as part of a healthy diet, to prevent serious birth defects.

We would like to suggest that an entire segment of one of Oprah's shows be devoted to a pre-pregnancy body make over, since half of all pregnancies are not planned. This would fit in nicely with your current themes for healthy living in 2009. The National Council on Folic Acid stands ready to work with you to provide your viewers with the facts, including the options available for women to get the folic acid they need every day. We are in total agreement with Oprah and Dr. Oz that Americans need to take control of their lives and change their health habits. We hope that we can join forces in your efforts.

We believe that we can offer you some exciting and critical information that women will be drawn to, such as:

- Know your numbers (diabetes, high blood pressure, infections or other health problems) and what you can do about them.
- Make a reproductive life plan: Your goals and plan for having or not having children.
- Take a multivitamin with folic acid each day.
- Incorporate foods enriched with folic acid, like enriched white bread and rice, cereals, and pasta.
- Get to a healthy weight, including making exercise part of your routine.
- Stop smoking, drinking alcohol and taking illegal drugs.
- Look at your environment, including your stress levels and safety.
- Know your family history.

- Get regular, preventative medical and dental check-ups, including a pre-pregnancy check-up


By eating foods rich in folic acid, women are also eating “healthy.” Having enough folic acid is actually a lifetime goal for women, starting before conception and continuing throughout one’s life. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention recommends that health-care professionals encourage women who can become pregnant to consume folic acid daily through a vitamin supplement or enriched foods.

We agree that 100% whole grains are important and an excellent source of micronutrients and fiber. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest that people make half their grains whole; however these guidelines also say that the remaining servings can come from enriched or other grain products. “Enriched” grain products are fortified with folic acid with the intention of preventing serious birth defects of the spine and brain. Since the Food and Drug Administration 1998 mandate that any grain and cereal product carrying the label “enriched” be fortified with folic acid, we have seen birth defects drop by 26%.

As we discussed with Dr. Oz and Jack Mori on January 13, women need synthetic folic acid daily, as this is the form most readily absorbed by the body. Women have options, such as taking a multivitamin or looking for fortified foods, which carry the label “enriched,” to get the folic acid they need. Unfortunately, we know that less than half of these women take a multivitamin everyday. Studies show that most women do not achieve the recommended amount of folic acid (400 mcg) by eating naturally folate-rich foods. Therefore, “enriched” products, like cereals, grains, pasta, and rice, offer a viable option for women to get the folic acid they need.

We urge Oprah to share these critical health messages with her viewers through a segment on her show. We would like to partner with you in any way that we can, including sharing updates on fascinating new emerging research. You may contact Adriane Griffen, our National Council on Folic Acid Project Director, at 202-944-3285, x13, or [ncfa@sbaa.org](mailto:ncfa@sbaa.org) to discuss our next steps.

Sincerely,



Connie S. Motter MS, CGC  
Co-Chair, National Council on Folic Acid



## NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FOLIC ACID

### Members

Alabama Folic Acid Council  
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