

# Supplement use predicts folate status in Canadian women

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Researchers have gained new insight into why 22% of Canadian women of childbearing age are still not achieving a folate concentration considered optimal for reducing the risk of having babies with neural tube defects, despite a virtual absence of folate deficiency in the general Canadian population.

When the authors examined a nation-wide study, they found a main reason why some women are not achieving levels optimal for reducing risk is many do not take the supplemental folic acid recommended for this population.

This article appears in the April issue of the journal *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*.

"This segment of the population is the target of [fortification](#) and supplementation policies and clarifying the factors associated with achieving optimal [folate status](#) is essential to refining interventions," Cynthia Colapinto, lead author. "The importance of folic acid supplementation for women of childbearing age must be distinguished from the needs of the general population."

The study found folic acid supplement intake was the most significant predictor of optimal RBC ([red blood cell](#)) folate concentration for this subgroup. Supplement intake, in turn, was significantly related to income, with a greater percentage of folic acid supplement users in the highest income group. Furthermore, only 25% of Canadian women of childbearing age reported taking a folic acid supplement. According to the report, these data indicate a need for targeted strategies to improve compliance with folic acid supplement recommendations to assist women of childbearing age in achieving desired folate concentrations.

**More information:** Colapinto, C., O'Connor, D. Dubois, L., and Tremblay, M. (2012) Folic acid supplement use is the most significant predictor of folate concentrations in Canadian women of

childbearing age. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*. 37(2). DOI: [10.1139/H11-161](https://doi.org/10.1139/H11-161)

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