

Go Folic! Women's Nutrition Project Description

Rationale

While San Francisco women receive comprehensive prenatal care at higher rates than the California average (80% vs. 78%), they also have high infant mortality rates (8 per 1000 births) and low birth weight infants (6.8%, 36% higher than Healthy People 2010 objectives)¹. One of the most crucial and easily correctable nutritional deficiencies among reproductive-age women is inadequate folic acid intake, a primary cause of neural tube defects (NTDs). Recent studies also have established a connection between inadequate folate intake and preterm labor: in one NIH study of 40,000 women, those who took folic acid supplements for a year or longer before conception had a significantly lower risk of preterm birth between 20 and 28 weeks of gestation².

Overview:

Go Folic! is a project of the San Francisco Department of Public Health's Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Section. It works to increase folic acid intake among low-income reproductive age women in San Francisco through the following:

1. A vitamin distribution program;
2. A public awareness campaign;
3. Community outreach.

Go Folic! Vitamin Distribution Program:

Go Folic! is making available a year's supply of free multi-vitamins with folic acid to all San Francisco women between the ages of 14-55. Staff members at the following clinics and programs are automatically offering the supplements to their eligible clients (new sites will be added through April 2010):

- Balboa Teen Health Center (ages 18 and under)
- Cole Street Clinic (ages 24 and under)
- Hawkins Village Teen Health Center (ages 24 and under)
- Hip Hop to Health Clinic (ages 24 and under)
- Larkin Street Medical Clinic (ages 24 and under)
- SFCC Student Health Center (must be enrolled at City College)
- San Francisco WIC Program & the Black Infant Health Project

Women who are not clients of the above programs can obtain a year's free supply of multi-vitamins at the Go Folic! Office, which is centrally located at the corners of Market & Van Ness Avenue. Interested women should call 1-800-300-9950 for details.

Go Folic! Public Awareness Campaign:

This campaign is focused on reaching reproductive-age women in the African American, Latino, and Chinese communities. Based on extensive marketing research with members of our target audiences, it includes the following elements:

1. *TRADITIONAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN* utilizing radio, television, bus ads, newspaper articles and television appearances. The first radio PSAs in English and Spanish are scheduled to begin airing during the later part of January 2010.

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2. *VIRAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN* targeting English-speaking women ages 24 and younger, that utilizes new, Internet-based media components. Go Folic! already has established a website, FaceBook, MySpace, and Twitter presence and is conducting what will be the first of several online contests. A blog and YouTube presence are in the works. All components can be accessed via the Go Folic! website at www.gofolic.org.
3. *COMMUNITY OUTREACH* at farmers' markets, health fairs and community events. Go Folic! community events scheduled for January include the following:
 - a. January 6, 2010: Press Conference health in conjunction with National Folic Acid Awareness Week.
 - b. January 21, 2010: "Youth Go Folic!" event at Balboa High School to introduce the project to SFUSD Wellness Center personnel, high school journalists and youth serving community-based organizations. Activities will include music from the KMEL van, a panel presentation by youth peer educators and health advocates, tasty and easy-to-make folic-rich snacks, and educational games that can be played for prizes.
 - c. January 28, 2010: "Eating for Health, Wellness & Beauty" will introduce the project to community-based organizations that serve adult San Francisco women. Cosponsored with the Black Infant Health Project, it will be open to the public and will feature games, a panel presentation, a Black Infant Health Project open house, and a buffet of folic-rich foods.

All campaign components will promote the following messages:

1. *WOMEN CONTEMPLATING PREGNANCY*: When it comes to taking folic acid, the three months prior to becoming pregnant are the most important for the purposes of reducing the risk for NTD. Taking a multivitamin with folic acid may also prevent other birth defects and lower your risk for giving birth too early.
2. *WOMEN NOT CONTEMPLATING PREGNANCY*: Taking folic acid is important for all women, not only because 50% of all pregnancies are unplanned, but also because it may have a host of other health benefits. Because folic acid is good for your hair, nails and skin, it can be called "beauty from the inside out".

Project Funder:

The Go Folic! Project is made possible by a grant from the Vitamin Cases Consumer Settlement Fund. Created as a result of an antitrust class action, one of the purposes of the Fund is to improve the health and nutrition of California consumers.

REFERENCES

¹ California Department of Health Services. *County Health Status Profiles 2006*. California Health and Human Services Agency, April 2006; pp 40,50,56.

² National Institutes of Health, <http://www.nih.gov/news/health/may2009/od-19.htm>, Accessed 7/7/09