

# Food Supplements and Medications During Pregnancy

This article has been reviewed by *Thanai Pongdee, MD, FAAAAI*



It has long been known that the choices you make during pregnancy can have a lasting impact, but new research shows folate levels and food allergen intake during pregnancy could influence whether your child will develop food allergies or asthma.

## Folate Levels

An adequate folate level is recommended for women during pregnancy because it is essential in fetal development and lowers the risk of neural tube defects like spina bifida.

Yet, results from a recent study indicate that too much of a good thing may produce negative consequences.

Children born to mothers who had plasma folate levels in the top 20% had an increased risk of asthma at age three in comparison to those mothers who had the lowest levels. The researchers also found that as the mother's plasma folate level increased so did the risk of asthma in the child.

Getting enough folate is important, but too much may cause risks. That is why it is important for pregnant women to follow the advice of their physicians.

## Can allergic disease be prevented?

We all laugh at strange pregnancy craving stories, but if you have a child with a food allergy, does avoiding food allergens during a subsequent pregnancy make a difference in a possible allergy or asthma diagnosis for the baby?

Another recent study focused on pregnant women who have food allergic children. This group avoided food allergens in the third trimester of pregnancy, during breast feeding and into the second year of life. Emphasis was placed on avoiding nuts, but egg and milk intake were also monitored.

As a result, the babies had significantly lower rates of peanut and egg sensitivity at both 18 and 36 months, and these babies were less likely to develop symptoms of asthma at both ages.

## PROGRAM FOCUSES ON THE RESPIRATORY HEALTH OF PREGNANT WOMEN

- The Vaccines and Medications in Pregnancy Surveillance System (VAMPSS) is a new effort led by the AAAAI and includes the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS) and the Slone Epidemiology Center (SEC) at Boston University.
- Given that asthma is one of the most commonly treated chronic diseases of pregnant women, the initial focus of VAMPSS will be respiratory health. This includes surveillance of asthma medications, seasonal and H1N1 vaccines, and antiviral medications used to treat influenza.
- Pregnant women who take asthma medications and/or have received the seasonal influenza vaccine, the H1N1 vaccine, or any antiviral medications to prevent or treat the flu can call OTIS at (877) 311- 8972 to access safety information and enroll in a study.

## To the Point

Excessive folate levels and early allergen avoidance during pregnancy may make a difference in your baby's risk of developing allergic diseases.



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