

**Family Living  
Focus**

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**Are You Folate Smart?**

Have you ever heard of folate? Do you know what it can do for you? Do you know how to get it into your diet? Read on to find out!

**What is folate or folacin?**

Folacin's a member of the B-complex family of vitamins. It's water-soluble, sensitive to light, heat and air. Folacin/folate come from the same root word as "foliage;" it's found in dark green leafy vegetables. Folate is the natural form in foods; folic acid is the synthetic form in vitamin supplements and fortified foods such as cereals and enriched grains.

**Why is folate needed?**

The body needs folic acid to make DNA and RNA, the genetic blueprint for the structure and function of every cell in the body. It's needed for rapid cell growth and healthy cell division, important for developing healthy babies and cancer prevention. Folacin also helps eliminate homocysteines in the blood that lead to heart attacks. By forming hemoglobin in red blood cells, it

prevents anemia.

**Who needs folacin? Why?**

- **Pregnant women:** To help prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal column called "neural tube birth defects." NTD's occur in about one per thousand pregnancies in the U.S. each year. Anyone who becomes pregnant is at risk for NTD. About 95 percent of NTD pregnancies occur in women with no past history of NTD's. Folate is critical before and during the first few weeks of pregnancy — before many women are even aware they are pregnant. That's why it's recommended that all women of child-bearing age consume 400 mcg of folate each day. Studies show this may help reduce the risk of certain birth defects by 50-70 percent. Women who have had one NTD child are at higher risk for having a second affect child, so should increase their folic acid intake starting one month before conception.
- **Seniors:** To protect against heart disease. Folate helps break down homocysteine, an amino acid that is emerging as a new

risk factor for heart attacks and strokes. Because it damages arteries, it can restrict blood flow to the heart and brain. High homocysteine levels in the blood plus insufficient folate levels in the diet can triple the risk of heart attack. Four B vitamins — folate, riboflavin, B6 and B12 are needed to help prevent a homocysteine buildup in the blood. It is estimated that at least 13,400 deaths annually from coronary artery disease could be prevented if Americans consumed more folate. About 40 percent of Americans do not consume enough folate to keep blood homocysteine levels low. Men with high blood homocysteine levels are three times more likely to have a heart attack than men with lower levels. High homocysteine levels may increase the risk for coronary artery disease by 67 percent in men and by 80 percent in women.

- **Women:** To curtail cancer risk. Folate may help reduce the risk of several types of cancer because it plays an important role in healthy cell division and is crucial in the repair of damaged cells. Folate can help prevent damage to lung tissue caused by smoking and protect cervical tissue from forming abnormal cells that can lead to cancer. People with higher folate levels are also less likely to develop colon cancer. Folacin can help prevent the formation of colon polyps, the forerunners of colon cancer. If they are caught early and removed, colon cancer does not develop.

**What Foods Are Rich In Folate?**

Our bodies do not produce folate; we need to get it from the foods we eat. While you can obtain folic acid from a vitamin supplement, folate-rich foods like beans, also provide other important nutrients such as fiber, to help round out a healthy diet.

- **Excellent Folate Sources:** Fortified cereals, lentils, black-eyed peas.

- **Good Folate Sources:** Pinto beans, chick peas, baby lima beans, spinach, more breakfast cereals, wheat germ, asparagus, orange juice.

- **Fair Sources:** Split peas, orange, broccoli, eggs, bananas, strawberries, Brussel sprouts, peas, beets.

**Fortified grain foods:** Enriched breakfast cereals, bread, flour, pasta, rice, cornmeal. As of January 1998, enrichment is not required, but if enriched, the law stipulates how much must be added...140 mcg of folic acid is added to every 100 grams of grain. This dose assures an increase of 100 micrograms in the diet. Most grain products in grocery stores are enriched, but locally baked goods and imported products might not be. Check the food label to be sure. Fortification increase average folate intake by about 100 micrograms per day. People still need to eat the right foods or take supplements.

**How Much Folate Is Needed Per Day?**

- **All adults — 400 micrograms per day.** This would reduce NTD's by 50-70 percent. (Women with epilepsy, diabetes or a family history of NTD's need more.)

- **Pregnant women — 600 mcg folate per day,** 400 from folic acid supplements, the rest from food.

**Why Are Folic Acid Supplements Important?**

It's hard to get enough folate from food alone. A multivitamin is not a substitute for a poor diet, it complements a healthy diet. Most American women consume only half of what's needed per day. Plus, the body's ability to absorb dietary folic acid varies considerably from person to person. As many as one in seven people carry a gene that causes a deficiency in folate even if eating a diet with the recommended amount of folate. These people have trouble breaking down folate in food to a form of folic acid the body can use. Also, poor eating habits, stringent dieting, alcohol abuse, cigarette smoking, oral contraceptive use interfere with the absorption of folic acid. The folic acid found in supplements and fortified foods is more easily absorbed. Plus overcooking can destroy much of the folic acid in foods. Take a daily multivitamin to insure folic acid needs will be met. Most daily multivitamins and supplements contain 400 micrograms of folic acid. To remember to take it, take your supplement when brushing your teeth.

**What happens if you get too much folate?**

High levels can mask signs of pernicious anemia caused by inability to absorb Vitamin B12. Thus folic acid fortification is designed to keep daily intake below one milligram or 1,000 micrograms to avoid masking pernicious anemia.

# Grossman Continues Reign

COCHRANVILLE (Chester Co.) — Amanda Grossman formally ended her yearlong reign as 1999 Chester County Dairy Princess Saturday, June 3 here at the Cochranville Community Center.

Amanda's duties included visiting school children of all ages, interviewing on live radio, writing newspaper articles, speaking to farmers, and encouraging and teaching consumers to use Real dairy products.

In her farewell speech, Amanda highlighted her year and thanked her family and committee members. She explained that since no other dairy princess candidate came forward to serve, she will continue to be available to appear in crown and banner throughout the coming year.

The 2000 Dairy Princess Court consists of six dairy ambassadors and five dairy maids. Each of these young ladies will be trained at a one day mini-seminar to learn dairy nutrition and information, public speaking, and appropriate attire and conduct for dairy promoters. Dairy ambassadors are between ages 15-18.

Meredith Baily is the daughter of Barnard and Jane Baily of West Chester. She attends Unionville High School and is in-

involved in Chester Valley Dairy 4-H club.

Betsy Young is the daughter of Charles and Debra Young of West Grove. She attends Avon Grove High School and is a member of Manor Dairy 4-H Club.

Laura King is the daughter of Marvin and Carolyn King of Cochranville. She attends Octara Area High School and is involved in her church youth group.

Erica Lloyd is the daughter of Ron and Cindy Lloyd of Pottstown. She attends the Center for Arts & Technology and is a member of the Tri-Community Dairy 4-H Club.

Rebecca Nolan is the daughter of Rob and Sharon Nolan of Cochranville. She attends Octara Area High School and is a member of the Manor Dairy 4-H Club.

Dairy maids also have opportunity to promote to consumers and are from age 12-15. Tiffany Kissell is the daughter of Steve and Kim Harrop of Chester Springs. She attends Lionville Middle School and is a member of the Chester Springs Dairy 4-H Club.

Christy Guest is the daughter of Stan and Cathy Guest of

Pottstown. She attends Owen J. Robert's Area Middle School and is a member of the Tri-Community Dairy 4-H Club.

Pepper Kissell is the daughter of Steve and Kim Harrop of Chester Springs. She attends Lionville Middle School and is a member of the Chester Springs Dairy 4-H Club.

Trisha Harrop is the daughter of Bruce and Betsy Harrop of Chester Springs. She attends Lionville Middle School and is a member of the Chester Valley Dairy 4-H Club.

Becky Baily is the daughter of Barnard and Jane Baily of West Chester. She attends the Unionville Area Middle School and is a member of the Chester Valley Dairy 4-H Club.

These young ladies will be working with the Chester County Milk Promotion Committee in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Dairy Princess and Promotion Services, Inc. and American Dairy Association/Dairy Council Middle Atlantic, promoting dairy products and the dairy industry throughout the county for the next year. Anyone interested in having one of these young ladies to speak to your group or organization, contact Sharon Nolan at (610) 593-7465.



Representing Chester County dairy royalty are Trisha Harrop, center, and from left, Becky Nolan, Amanda Grossman, and Betsy Young.

# What Is Pond Slime

The green slime you see on ponds is really an aquatic or water plant called filamentous algae. Algae is a weed that is very common in Ohio. It usually starts growing in late spring or summer when the temperatures are warm.

This water weed is also called moss or pond scum. The algae

forms thick mats of hair-like strands that begin growing on submerged objects at the bottom of the pond-things like rocks, tree limbs, or garbage.

As it grows, the algae gives off oxygen. The air bubbles are trapped in the thick mat of algae and this causes it to rise to the top of the water. Algae can cover

a pond and make the quality of the water harmful for the plants and animals that live in the pond. Because algae grows so rapidly, it can cover the surface and block out sunlight and air.

Algae is also harmful for humans because it changes the quality of the water. And who would want to swim in a pond covered with green slime?

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