



An Open Letter from Designs for Health about Folic Acid

The April issue of *Prevention* magazine contains an article entitled *Is Your Breakfast Giving You Cancer?* that has generated significant media and public concern regarding folic acid. This letter is intended to address this concern as it relates to Designs for Health products. The *Prevention* magazine article presents research that suggests that synthetic folic acid fortification of white flour, rice, breakfast cereals, nutrition bars, beverages, most multi-vitamins and many other nutritional supplements, has led to significant increases in cancer, particularly colon, prostate, and lung cancer. "The more we learn about folic acid, the more it's clear that giving it to everyone has very real risks," says folic acid researcher David Smith, PhD, a professor of pharmacology at the University of Oxford in England, as quoted in the *Prevention* magazine article.

To view the *Prevention* magazine article and the DFH position paper entitled "Folate Rationale", please visit the Library section of our website.

It is estimated that this practice of synthetic folic acid fortification has resulted in 15,000 additional cancers per year in the United States alone. However, other health concerns such as spina bifida and cardiovascular events have been significantly reduced because of folic acid fortification. At Designs for Health we fully understand and appreciate the critical roles in regard to health that folates play, including facilitating proper methylation for optimal genetic expression, and lowering the risk of neural tube defects and cardiovascular disease, both associated with elevated homocysteine levels. Is there a way to gain benefit from folates without contributing to cancer risk and incidence? **Yes!**

Designs for Health takes its "Science first" commitment very seriously. Several years ago when papers linking un-metabolized folic acid to cancer emerged, we became alarmed. After an extensive review of this scientific literature, we quickly took action. In an unprecedented and costly move, **we transitioned our entire product line to NatureFolate™, which is a blend of natural folates including those from spinach.** The folate forms found in NatureFolate™ are 5-methyltetrahydrofolate (5-MTHF) and 5-formyl tetrahydrofolate (5-FTHF). These are safe, natural forms which are quickly and easily utilized by the body. NatureFolate™ provides the proven benefits of optimal folate supplementation without the risks. DFH replaced folic acid with NatureFolate™ not only in our featured folate products, but in all DFH products, such as our multivitamins and formulary blends.

We also embarked on an awareness campaign detailing this issue for those clinicians using our professional supplement line, including this DFH position paper on folic acid vs. natural folates. This informative paper discusses and scientifically references the concerns of folic acid and outlines the problems associated with excessive intake of folic acid. "Unlike folate, folic acid isn't found in nature, so we don't know the effect of the excess," says folic acid researcher David Smith, PhD, a professor of pharmacology at the University of Oxford in England, in the *Prevention* magazine article. We strongly encourage you to take the time to read both the *Prevention* magazine article and the position paper prepared by Designs for Health.

A vast majority of nutritional supplement companies still use 100% folic acid in their supplement line, while a few use a blend of folic acid along with some level of natural folates. Others use methylated folates, such as 5-MTHF, in featured folate products only, while using folic acid in their multivitamins and formulary products. One can find others that claim they only use "whole food" nutrients, when in reality one can simply read their labels and see products that contain some amount of food mash combined with synthetic USP vitamins, often including folic acid.

One well known company, when recently quizzed by a clinician as to why they haven't changed to natural folates, replied that the costs of natural folates and of redoing all of their product stability testing would be too expensive. How inexpensive does a formulation change have to be for a company to choose to improve the safety of a product? How is this not an important enough issue to act right away?

The cost of using a natural folate blend like NatureFolate™ is up to 400 times more expensive than folic acid. DFH is willing to make this investment in raw materials because our aim is the same as yours, to optimize wellness and never compromise safety. You can trust Designs for Health to make "Science first" decisions, and product modifications as necessary, based on emerging research.

Dr. David M. Brady
Chief Medical Officer
Designs for Health, Inc.