



USE OF FOLIC ACID SUPPLEMENTS DURING PREGNANCY

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BACKGROUND

Current recommendations detail that women planning pregnancy should use a folic acid supplement of 0.4mg per day from at least 4 weeks before until 12 weeks after conception. The objective of this study was to analyse the factors that affect the use of folic acid supplements in an Irish cohort.

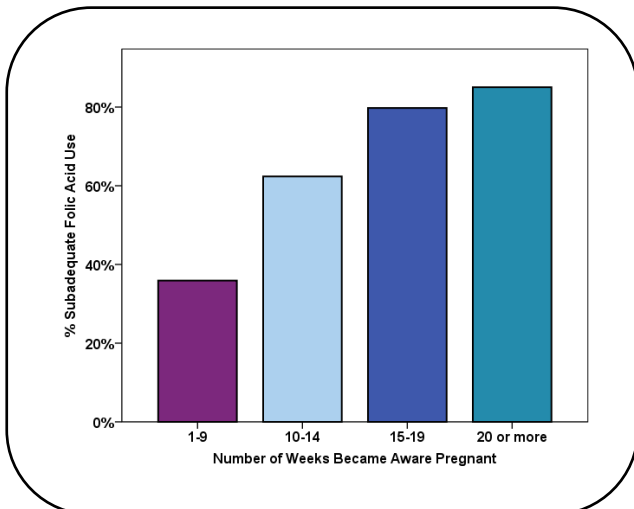
This study presents findings from the first wave of data collection from *Growing Up in Ireland – the National Longitudinal Study of Children*. The study aims to track the lives of infants and children in Ireland following a cohort of 9-month old infants and a cohort of 9-year old. The current study uses the infant study population of 11,093 9-month olds and their mothers. Data was collected through questionnaires with parents in their homes.

FOLIC ACID SUPPLEMENT USE

Folic acid use consumption was sub-adequate in 36.3% of the sample. Likewise, a study from England found 88.9% of women reported taking folic acid supplements prior to their 18-week antenatal clinic appointment, however, 51.6% of the women surveyed did not take folic acid supplement before 4 weeks of gestation¹. During the first trimester of pregnancy a minority of women (6.7%; 95% CI: 6.3 – 7.2%) did not take a folic acid supplement.

A significant association between the number of weeks the mother became aware that they were pregnant and taking folic acid during the first three months of pregnancy ($Z=-11.0$; $p<0.001$) was observed. In the group of women who became aware of the pregnancy after the first trimester, only a third took folic acid.

Sub-adequate folic acid use and number of weeks became aware of pregnancy



REFERENCE

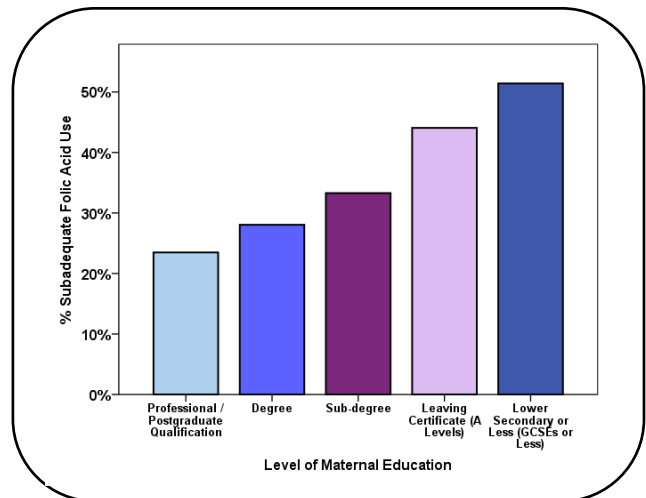
¹ Relton CL, Hammal DM, Rankin J, Parker L. Folic acid supplementation and social deprivation. *Public Health Nutr.* 2005 May;8(3):338–40.

* Inpress reference.....

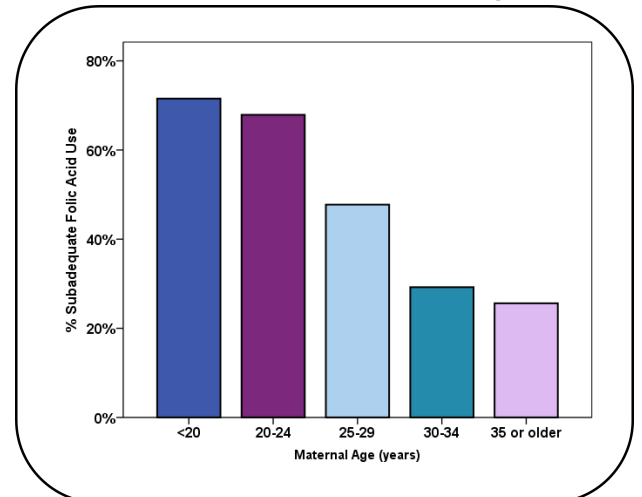
FACTORS AFFECTING FOLIC ACID SUPPLEMENT USE

In addition to the intended-ness of the pregnancy, in a multivariate logistic regression model, not taking folic acid was significantly associated with lower maternal age, education, income and occupational household class.

Folic Acid Supplement Use and Maternal Education



Folic Acid Supplement Use and Maternal Age



CONCLUSION

These findings indicate that folic acid supplement use is sub-adequate in Ireland. Prenatal folic acid supplement use in women of child bearing age should be encouraged, focusing particularly on raising awareness of the benefits of folic acid among younger women.

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