

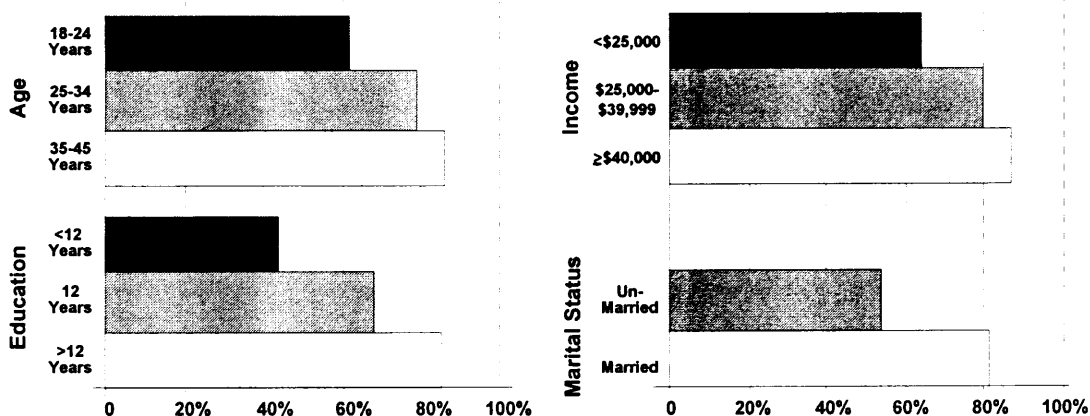
FOLIC ACID AWARENESS

Data are from the

MAINE PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT MONITORING SYSTEM (PRAMS): 1996

- ➔ Maternal intake of folic acid has been identified as one of the most significant contributors to the development of the neural tube in the fetus. The neural tube is the embryonic structure that develops into the brain and the spine. Evidence indicates that adequate consumption of folic acid can result in a 50% - 70% reduction in the rate of neural tube defects - defects which are very debilitating and often fatal, such as anencephaly and spina bifida.¹
- ➔ During the first 7 years of this decade, birth attendants in Maine reported through the birth certificate that 39 babies were born in the state with neural tube defects. There were an additional 13 occurrences of these conditions which resulted in fetal deaths.²
- ➔ Nearly three quarters of Maine resident women (74%) who had a baby in 1996 had heard or read that taking the vitamin called folic acid could help prevent some birth defects.
- ➔ As age of mother, education of mother, and household income increased, so did awareness of the benefits of folic acid consumption.

Percent of New Mothers Who Were Aware of the Benefits of Folic Acid Consumption by Selected Characteristics: Maine PRAMS, 1996



- ➔ Eighty-two percent of married mothers were aware that consuming adequate amounts of folic acid could be a benefit to their unborn child while 54% of unmarried mothers were.
- ➔ Sixty-two percent of the mothers who were involved in the WIC program (Women, Infants, and Children's supplemental nutrition program) during their pregnancy were aware of the benefits of folic acid.

Note: A study done by this office in 1987 indicated that the reporting of birth defects information was under-reported on the birth certificate; it is widely believed that this under-reporting continues.

Footnote 1: Birth Defects and Infant Mortality: A National and Regional Profile, March of Dimes. **Footnote 2:** Maine Vital Statistics System. Full citations will be provided upon request.

For further data on this topic, please contact:

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