

TALBOT GREEN GROUP PRACTICE

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Please reply to Talbot Green ☐ Beddau ☐

Dear Patient

We are writing to let you know that your recent blood test result is back, and it shows that your folate level is low.

Folate deficiency is when your blood lacks the amount of vitamin B9 (folate) it needs to function properly. This may cause the body to produce larger red blood cells which can cause a wide range of symptoms.

We need to give you a medication to treat your deficiency. We have forwarded a prescription for some tablets to your nominated pharmacy (if you do not have a nominated pharmacy this will be available from Surgery, you will need to ring to find out whether this is at Talbot Green or Beddau). I have enclosed a leaflet with more useful information on folate deficiency.

What you need to do now:

- 1- Please take the medication as directed. You will need to take ONE tablet of FOLIC ACID daily for FOUR months.
- 2- After completing the four-month course, you need to book an appointment for a repeat of your folate blood test to make sure that your folate blood levels are restored and back to normal.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are always happy to help.

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What is folate?

Folate is a B9 vitamin found naturally in many of the foods you eat. Your body needs folate to make new red blood cells and DNA, the genetic material in your cells.

What is folic acid?

Folic acid is a manmade (synthetic) form of folate. Your body can't store large amounts of natural folate. But your body can easily absorb folic acid. As a result, it's added to some of the foods you eat. Grains such as rice, bread, pasta and some cereals are enriched (fortified) with folic acid. Folic acid is also available as a dietary supplement.

What causes folate deficiency?

- Diet that lacks folate.
- Digestive system diseases: Your digestive system doesn't absorb folic acid well if you have a disease such as inflammatory bowel disease or Celiac disease.
- Excessive alcohol use.
- Overcooking your fruits and vegetables.
- Certain medications: Some anti-seizure drugs and ulcerative colitis drugs interfere with the proper absorption of folate.
- Kidney dialysis.
- Pregnancy: This is because the developing baby needs more folic acid.

What are the symptoms of folate deficiency?

- Fatigue and lack of energy.
- Paleness.
- Shortness of breath.
- Irritability.

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- Dizziness.

Oral symptoms

- Tender, red tongue.
- Mouth ulcers

Neurological symptoms

- Memory loss.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Confusion.

How is folate deficiency diagnosed?

A level of folate of less than 3 micrograms/L in your blood test is used as a guide to indicate folate deficiency. However, there is an indeterminate zone with levels of 3-4.5 micrograms/L, so low folate does not mean you are definitely deficient.

How is folate deficiency treated?

- 1-A folic acid supplement, 5mg of folic acid daily for four months to restore folate levels.
- 2-Eating a healthy, balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables and other foods that contain folate or are enriched with folic acid.
- 3-Cutting down high alcohol intake.

Food containing folate/folic acid:

The best way to prevent folate deficiency is to eat a healthy diet that includes foods that contain folate or folic acid. Folate can be found naturally in:

- Beans, legumes and chickpeas.
- Citrus fruits such as oranges, and bananas.
- Green vegetables, such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, asparagus and peas.
- Liver.
- Seafood.
- Eggs and dairy.
- Meat and poultry.

Folic acid can be found in enriched or fortified:

- Bread.
- Flour.
- Pasta.
- Brown rice.
- Cereals.

The amount of folate you need every day depends on your age and other factors:

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- Most adults should get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folate daily which can be found in folate or folic acid containing food, as well as over the counter supplements.
- Pregnant females or planning to become pregnant should take a folic acid supplement to make sure they're getting enough folate each day. Dose in pregnancy will depend on certain factors such as past medical history and body mass index.

Sources:

<https://patient.info/doctor/folate-deficiency>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamin-b12-or-folate-deficiency-anaemia/>

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/anaemia-b12-folate-deficiency/prescribing-information/>