

NewsLetter



Mandatory Folic acid

Revised Bread and Flour Regulations 1998

The Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 have been amended to require the mandatory addition of folic acid to non-wholemeal flour.

The amendment also clarifies some existing requirements and certain definitions, as well as introducing exemptions for small-scale producers and bringing the enforcement regime into line with other food standards legislation by making modified Improvement Notices available to enforcement officers.

The mandatory addition of folic acid to non-wholemeal flour is intended to help reduce incidences of Neural Tube Defect (NTD) affected pregnancies. NTDs are birth defects of the brain, spine, or spinal cord of the foetus.

The amendment also requires that the levels added of calcium carbonate, iron and niacin are set at a "significant amount" or 15% of the Nutrient Reference Value (NRV). This brings the values in line with the requirements for vitamins and minerals in other foods.

Why add folic acid?

NTDs affect approximately 800 pregnancies a year in England and around 1,000 pregnancies in the UK as a whole.

NTD risk is associated with low levels of blood folate among pregnant women and women who could become pregnant.

In the UK, women who could become pregnant are advised to take a daily supplement of 400 micrograms of folic acid prior to conception and up until the 12th week of pregnancy.

However as approximately half of pregnancies are unplanned, many women do not take folic acid supplements during this period.

The amendment introduces the compulsory addition of folic acid to non-wholemeal wheat flour.

This is expected to reduce incidences of NTD affected pregnancies by 15-22% per year preventing around 100-210 potentially life-threatening spinal conditions in England and 150-220 in the UK as a whole.

When will the changes come into effect?

The introduction of Improvement Notices will come into effect on 13th December 2024.

The requirements relating to the mandatory addition of folic acid to non-wholemeal flour comes into effect on 13th December 2026.

More information

- [The Bread and Flour \(Amendment\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

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