

Folate Associated with Reduced Risk of Breast Cancer.

Source: American Journal of Epidemiology

Breast cancer is a cancer that forms in tissues of the breast, usually the ducts (tubes that carry milk to the nipple) and lobules (glands that make milk). It occurs in both men and women, although male breast cancer is rare. Risk factors for breast cancer include gender, age, family history, defective genes, early onset of menstruation, late menopause and late childbearing. Breast cancer is about ninety percent due to genetic abnormalities that happen as a result of the aging process and the “wear and tear” of life in general.

Folic acid is a member of the water-soluble B vitamin group. Isolated in 1946 from spinach leaves, its name comes from folium, the Latin word for leaf. In the body, folic acid is converted to a more biologically active form. Studies have shown that folate supplementation may be beneficial in preventing birth defects, enhancing cognitive function, and improving symptoms of depression.

New findings published in the American Journal of Epidemiology indicated that pre-menopausal women had a 40 percent reduced risk of developing breast cancer with higher intake of folate. Scientists used the Shanghai Women’s Health Study (1997-2008) which involved 72,861 women aged between 40 and 70 to assess possible associations between folate, niacin, vitamin B6 and B12 and incidence of breast cancer. The results were higher intake of folate was related to reduced risk of breast cancer and this only applied to premenopausal women. Higher levels of niacin intake resulted in 60 percent higher risk of breast cancer. In conclusion these findings support the hypothesis that high folate intake may reduce the risk of breast cancer.¹

1 Shrubsole MJ, Shu XO, Li HL, et al. Dietary B vitamin and methionine intakes and breast cancer risk among Chinese women. *Am J Epidemiol.* 2011;173(10):1171-82.