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Press Release

Folic Acid fortification of flour comes into force, but there is still a need for education around supplementation says the HFMA

As the Government regulation for the fortification of non-wholemeal flour with folic acid, came into force on 14th November along with extensive press coverage of the story, the Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) asserted that they will continue to push the message that women planning a pregnancy or recently becoming pregnant should continue to use a folic acid supplement at the recommended dose of 400 mcg.

Whilst food fortification will help more women increase their daily intake of folic acid, depending on their diet and lifestyle, if bread is their main source they would need to consume around 10 slices of bread a day to achieve levels recommended to help prevent these birth defects.

England's Chief Medical Officer Professor Sir Chris Whitty welcomed the plans to fortify foods, but also commented that supplementation should still be used.

In the Government press release he said, 'The fortification of flour is a simple and effective way to help to reduce cases of neural tube defects, although it is important that women who are pregnant or intending to become pregnant continue to take folic acid supplements before and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.'

The HFMA believes that the supplementation message needs to be a continual process and will continue to push that message with government departments and policy makers. Martin Last, HFMA Director General, commented, 'Fortification of flour with folic acid is a step forward in helping to prevent neural tube defects, however we will continue to encourage the Government for an ongoing education programme to highlight the importance for pregnant women or those planning a pregnancy, to take a supplement of folic acid up to week 12 of their pregnancy.'

The HFMA also see the extensive coverage this story has received as a great opportunity for health food stores to be a key part of the education process helping women prepare for a healthy pregnancy. Theresa Cutts, HFMA PR and Marketing Consultant commented, 'Health food stores are often at the heart of the community and get to know their customers well. This is a perfect opportunity for retailers to help educate and inform by talking to customers about the importance of supplementation and the benefits of a healthy diet especially when there is such high-profile coverage of the new legislation.'

The HFMA will continue to monitor the messages coming from Government departments and encourage an ongoing education programme to ensure the importance of supplementation continues to be included in coverage surrounding folic acid.

*****ENDS*****

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About the HFMA:

The HFMA, the voice of the UK's natural health industry since 1965, represents over 120 manufacturers and suppliers of natural health products.

As the authoritative voice of the natural products industry, the HFMA supports the interests of its members with legislators and regulators; promotes industry best practice for product quality and safety; and provides responsible information for consumers. For further information about the HFMA, visit www.hfma.co.uk