

# Folic acid added to flour to prevent spinal conditions in babies

- Aim to avoid hundreds of potentially life-threatening spinal conditions in babies every year
- Adding folic acid to flour across the UK builds on 80 years of fortification and follows consultation with industry, stakeholders and the public
- The addition of folic acid to food has helped to reduce neural tube defects in a number of countries worldwide

Folic acid will be added to non-wholemeal wheat flour across the UK to help prevent life-threatening spinal conditions in babies, the Government and devolved administrations has announced.

Adding folic acid will mean foods made with flour, such as bread, will actively help avoid around 200 neural tube defects each year – around 20% of the annual UK total.

Non-wholemeal flour is already an established vehicle for fortification in the UK and the costs of fortification to industry are expected to be minimal.

The addition of folic acid to food has been a successful public health policy in a number of countries worldwide such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, resulting in falls in neural tube defects.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Few things are as important as a baby's health – and folic acid-fortified flour is a quick, simple win to enhance their development.

This will give extra peace of mind to parents and families, as well as helping boost the health of adults across the country.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

We are committed to giving more children a healthy start in life. With the safe and taste-free folic acid baked into the national diet, hundreds more babies will be born healthy each year.

Focusing on preventing life-threatening health issues such as spina bifida, will ensure fewer people will require hospital treatment, and more individuals and families are able to live healthier lives.

The neural tube forms the early part of the brain and spine within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy – usually before the mother knows she is pregnant.

Folic acid is the synthetic/man-made form of folate. Not getting enough folate (Vitamin B9) at this crucial time can lead to neural tube defects and result in spinal conditions such as spina bifida or anencephaly.

Folate helps the body make healthy red blood cells and is naturally occurring in certain foods, such as leafy green vegetables. Folic acid is already voluntarily added by food manufacturers to breakfast cereal, including some gluten free products, meaning people can usually get all they need from eating a balanced diet, but a higher intake is required in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

The NHS strongly recommends women who could become pregnant or are planning a pregnancy take a 400 micrograms folic acid tablet every day before pregnancy and until they are 12 weeks pregnant. This advice will continue, but with around 50% of pregnancies in the UK unplanned, the Government is taking action to increase folic acid intake nationally to help protect more babies, especially where a pregnancy is unplanned and supplements are not taken early enough.

Over 99% of British households buy bread and over a quarter of all groceries in the four biggest supermarkets contain flour, making adding folic acid to flour-based products a simple way to increase folate levels for tens of millions of people across the UK.

Since the Second World War, flour has been fortified with calcium, iron, niacin and thiamin during milling to support the nation's health. Today's announcement joins 80 countries, such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, adding folic acid to staple food products to help reduce neural tube defects.

This public health decision is not anticipated to require major overhaul for industrial-scale flour producers. Folic acid will need to be added to the labelling of all foods made with flour – as is the case with other fortification.

Wholemeal flour and gluten free foods are not subject to mandatory fortification and these products are not in the initial scope of this policy. Wholemeal flour has more naturally occurring folate than non-wholemeal wheat flour, and some wholemeal and gluten free foods are already voluntarily fortified with folic acid in the UK.

Alex Waugh, Director of UK Flour Millers said:

Flour, whether white brown or wholemeal, is an ingredient in many foodstuffs and supplies a big proportion of our daily fibre and protein along with essential nutrients such as calcium, iron and B vitamins. If it is decided that folic acid should be added to flour for public health reasons, flour millers will do all they can to overcome any practical challenges to make it happen.

Kate Steele, CEO of Shine, the charity that provides specialist support for people whose lives have been affected by spina bifida and hydrocephalus,

says:

Shine is delighted by the Government's decision to support mandatory fortification of the most commonly-consumed flours in the UK with folic acid – a move we have campaigned for over thirty years.

Mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid will improve public health for so many, now and in the future.

In its simplest terms, the step will reduce the numbers of families who face the devastating news that their baby has anencephaly and will not survive. It will also prevent some babies being affected by spina bifida, which can result in complex physical impairments and poor health. This is truly a momentous day'.

A four nation review of Bread and Flour Regulations is being undertaken by officials in Defra, the Department of Health and Social Care, Food Standards Agency, and Food Standards Scotland. The implementation of the UK decision on the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid will be included in this review.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities – launching fully on October 1st – will lead efforts to level up health disparities across the nation by supporting people of all ages, in all areas of the country, to live healthier lives and prevent illness.

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## [London Tech Week speech: Trevelyan announces five-point plan for digital trade](#)

Welcome to London Tech Week's Global Leaders Innovation Summit. I'm Anne-Marie Trevelyan, the new Secretary of State for International Trade.

As fast as things change in government – and goodness me haven't they in the last week – we know that the global economy is changing even faster.

The centre of global economic gravity is moving East, with almost 60% of the world's high-income earners expected to be in Asia by 2030.

This is fuelling a global demand for high-value UK industries, with digital services set to more than double this decade alone. And we can make the most of this huge opportunity as a sovereign trading nation.

As we recover from Covid, free trade and enterprise are going to be vital.

The UK has so much to offer the global marketplace. We are the second largest services exporter in the world. We are one of the most innovative economies, exporting most of our services digitally.

That is vital to modern business, whether it's Rolls-Royce monitoring engines as far away as the Gulf from Derby, or lawyers dealing with Australian and American clients on the same day.

We are home to third largest number of tech unicorns – firms worth £1 billion – like Revolut, Deliveroo, and even home to the third largest number of decacorns – the tech success stories worth over £10 billion.

And digital trade is not just about high-tech firms, but fundamental for all business.

That's why I am proud to be announcing today our five-point plan to unleash our trading potential:

- First is opening up digital markets to benefit consumers and businesses.
- Second is making it simpler and cheaper for businesses to trade internationally by securing trusted cross-border data flows.
- Third is advancing high standards in consumer and IP protections.
- Fourth is championing modern digital systems to help businesses cut through needless paperwork when trading
- And finally, we plan to use FTAs, the UK's G7 Presidency and independent voice at WTO to push the rules of global trade into the 21st century.

This five-point plan is rightly ambitious, but one we are fast delivering through our independent trade policy.

Our free trade agreements have a key role to play. Already, we have struck agreements covering 68 countries plus the EU worth £744bn. We are breaking new ground as first European nation to pursue a Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore.

That is the type of modern deals we can and should be striking. We are preparing to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would couple us with 11 dynamic Indo-Pacific markets.

By embracing new opportunities on the global marketplace, we will level up the country through trade and investment.

That means more high-quality jobs in the industries of the future across every region and nation of the UK. We are helping British businesses to thrive in some of the world's largest and fastest-growing markets through our Digital Trade Network for Asia-Pacific.

Over half of firms helped by this initiative are from outside London and the South-East, which shows how businesses in every part of the UK can thrive in the global marketplace.

And we are also driving jobs across the UK through our openness to investment.

Recently, we've seen great employers like Nissan giving a massive vote of confidence in the UK by growing their businesses in places like Sunderland. We will use the upcoming COP26 climate change summit to promote clean technologies which will help us not just build back better but also greener.

After that, our first Global Investment Summit will open the floodgates to even more investment in our key industries.

It seems to me that our global potential is clear. And now we have the plan to cement our status as a hub for trade and investment.

And I absolutely know that together, we can harness free trade to drive a jobs-led recovery across the country as we pave our way to prosperity.

Thank you.

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## [New campaign targets fly-tipping in Cornwall](#)

Don't Rubbish Illogan is a week-long campaign by the Environment Agency, Cornwall Council, Devon and Cornwall Police, Trading Standards and Biffa to tackle fly-tipping and waste crime.

Areas in Illogan, a village near Redruth, are hot spots for fly-tipping and as part of the campaign, a staged fly-tip will be set up at Tehidy Country Park on Monday 20 September.

The controlled fly-tip at Tehidy Country Park is made up of bulky goods which you often see fly-tipped, like white goods and furniture and will only remain in place for a few hours, under supervision, before being removed.

But it is hoped the sight at one of Illogan's beauty spots will create interest and debate about the importance of managing waste properly.

Kevin Baker of the Environment Agency said:

It might seem counterintuitive for a campaign against waste crime to arrange for rubbish to be dumped at a beauty spot. But secluded spots in Illogan are targeted by fly-tippers up to 90 times a year. The problem may often be out of sight to many, but this is an important reminder that this sort of thing is happening and continues to have a real impact on local environments and communities.

Everyone needs to be reminded that it doesn't matter where rubbish gets dumped, everyone ends up picking up the cost of this happening.

You would not use an unqualified tradesperson to fix your boiler or rewire your house because they might be cheaper and only accept cash. And the same applies to rubbish. Only use permitted waste carriers or run the risk of being prosecuted if your rubbish ends up fly-tipped in places like Illogan.

Each year, Cornwall Council spends an estimated £250,000 clearing waste that has been fly-tipped around the Duchy.

Councillor Martyn Alvey, portfolio holder for Environment and Climate Change at Cornwall Council, said:

Not only does fly-tipping cost council taxpayers a lot of money to clear up, it also ruins our beautiful countryside.

We are all responsible for making sure our rubbish is disposed of properly, and legally. Paying someone to take it away for you is often the simplest option but make sure you choose a respectable company. You can do this by using the Buy with Confidence Scheme.

Other planned activities by Don't Rubbish Illogan include chalk stenciling at known fly-tip locations to show these areas are being monitored to warn off dumpers, promotional posters and social media under #dontrubbishillogan.

Learn more about the Buy with Confidence Scheme at <https://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk>.

## **Notes to editors**

The Buy with Confidence Scheme provides people in Cornwall with a list of local businesses which have given their commitment to trading fairly.

Every business listed has undergone a series of detailed checks by Trading Standards officers before being approved as a member of the scheme to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way.

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**[UK-United Arab Emirates Memorandum of Cooperation on Industrial and Advanced](#)**

# Technologies Collaboration

## News story

The Memorandum seeks to enable greater collaboration on a range of shared priorities, including the development of our life sciences, space and hydrogen sectors.



On Wednesday 15 September 2021, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, was joined by His Excellency Dr Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Emirati Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, to sign a bilateral Memorandum of Cooperation on Industrial and Advanced Technologies Collaboration.

The Memorandum seeks to enable greater collaboration between the UK and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on a broad range of shared priorities, including the development of our life sciences, space, hydrogen, and wider industrial sectors, including supply chain resilience, regulations and standards. The Memorandum will be delivered through government-to-government cooperation, as well as business and academic engagement, and promises to provide tangible outcomes for both countries. Engagement across these sectors will be further enhanced through the investment opportunities agreed in the Sovereign Investment Partnership.

The signing took place during the Secretary of State and His Excellency Dr Al Jaber's first in-person meeting, as part of a wider Guest of Government visit to London by His Highness the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed. The Crown Prince met with the Prime Minister on 16 September. During this visit, the leaders jointly announced the new and ambitious UK-UAE Partnership for the Future, which will be strengthened by this Memorandum of Cooperation.

Speaking following the signing, UK Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

I was delighted to join His Excellency Dr Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber in signing this important Memorandum, ensuring a close working relationship between the UK and UAE as both countries accelerate progress in research and development, better regulation and the

transition to a greener planet.

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## [UN Human Rights Council 48: UK statement on Arbitrary Detention](#)

World news story

The UK delivered this statement during the Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.



Thank you, Madam President.

The United Kingdom would like to thank the Working Group for the presentation of its report today, and for the insights provided. We further recognise the volume of communications and requests for action handled by the Working Group.



Arbitrary detention is a hallmark of authoritarian regimes and its use is a tool of political intimidation. Arbitrary detention not only violates human rights, but also undermines the trust in institutions that keeps societies safe and open.

We know that persons in marginalised and vulnerable situations, as well as human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society activists are more often arbitrarily detained. We further recognise that persons who are arbitrarily detained are at greater risk of being subjected to other human rights violations.

This year, the United Kingdom has supported the Canadian-led Declaration against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State relations, and we have committed to working with the G7 and other likeminded partners to end the practice.

Members of the Working Group,

What further steps can states take to work together to end the practice of arbitrary detention?

Thank you.

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