



Department of Health & Social Care

*From the Ministerial Correspondence
and Public Enquiries Unit*

*39 Victoria Street
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Our ref: DE-1715587

24 July 2026

Dear Dr Craig, Dr Jones, and Dr Evans,

Thank you for your correspondence of 26 June to the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention, about folic acid in bread. I have been asked to reply.

I appreciate your concerns about the Government policy mandating fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid.

The primary objective of mandatory fortification is to increase folic acid intake among women of childbearing age, thereby improving blood folate levels and reducing the risk of neural tube defects (NTDs) during pregnancy. The aims to have the wider benefit of increasing the intake of folic acid and improving folate status across the whole population. Folate, including folic acid, plays an important role in forming healthy red blood cells and maintaining brain health.

The decision to fortify non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid has a long history. Folic acid fortification was recommended by Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) in 2006 after an extensive review of the evidence on folate and health (www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-folate-and-disease-prevention-report). Since then, there have been several further evidence reviews and modelling work (www.foodstandards.gov.scot/science-and-evidence/stochastic-modelling-to-estimate-the-potential-impact-of-fortification-of-flour-with-folic-acid-in-the-uk) to establish the level of folic acid added to flour as well as address concerns about potential adverse effects.

The policy has been subject to multiple public consultations, including the 2019 Department of Health and Social Care and Devolved Governments (DGs) consultation (www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adding-folic-acid-to-flour/proposal-to-add-folic-acid-to-flour-consultation-document); and in 2022, a consultation by the Department for Environment, Farming, & Rural Affairs and the DGs on the Bread and Flour review. These processes allowed members of the public, industry, and health professionals to provide feedback, and was a key part of policy development. It

considered the potential impact on adversely affected groups, ensuring that the policy addressed concerns related to health, equity, and accessibility for all.

All non-wholemeal wheat flour is already fortified with four nutrients: iron, thiamine, niacin, and calcium. Adding folic acid to non-wholemeal wheat flour and not fortifying wider than the type of flour that is presently fortified ensures that individuals can avoid fortified flour if they choose to or need to. This includes wholemeal flour, gluten-free products and other flour types such as soya or those from ancient grains like spelt flour.

The use of wheat flour as a product for folic acid fortification has been adopted in more than 60 countries world-wide, including Australia, Canada and the USA, either mandatorily or voluntarily. In the UK, voluntary fortification of certain foods with folic acid has been in place for decades, primarily in products such as breakfast cereals and spreads without evidence of adverse health effects.

Added vitamins and minerals must be labelled in the flour's ingredients list. This must also be declared when fortified flour is used as an ingredient. This means if a product contains flour that has been fortified with folic acid, it will be shown in the ingredients list, for example, **Wheat** Flour (**Wheat** Flour, Calcium Carbonate, Niacin, Iron, Folic Acid, Thiamin). The Government recognises how important clear information is, and it wants to ensure people can easily identify products that are suitable for them.

The Government knows that the policy may prompt questions and concerns. It has published some further information about the policy on a dedicated Food Standards Agency webpage at www.gov.uk/government/publications/folic-acid.

Additional information is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/folic-acid-supplementation-advice-to-health-professionals/folic-acid-supplementation-advice-to-health-professionals-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-chief-nursing-officers-and-chief-midwifery-officers and at www.gov.uk/guidance/bread-and-flour-labelling-and-composition.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Correspondence Officer
Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries
Department of Health and Social Care

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