

Folic Acid

Thank you for coming for your blood test. We have found your blood folic acid (vitamin B9) levels are low.

Folic acid is a vitamin that is needed to make new cells in the body, including red blood cells. A normal balanced diet usually contains enough folic acid. The body does not store very much folic acid so you need a regular fresh supply to keep healthy. The most common reason for low folic acid levels is not getting enough of this vitamin in your diet. Many foods contain folic acid, including spinach, sprouts, broccoli, green beans, peas, chickpeas, brown rice, kidney, liver and potatoes.

In a small number of people a lack of folic acid may cause of anaemia. Anaemia means that you have fewer red blood cells than normal.

Common symptoms include: tiredness, lethargy, feeling faint, becoming easily breathless. Other symptoms may include numbness in your hands and feet, but this is very rare. Low folic acid levels can easily be treated by taking a tablet of folic acid each day. You need to take this until the anaemia is corrected and the folic acid stores in the body are built up, which usually takes 4 months.

The doctor has issued a prescription for you to take one folic acid tablet daily for the next 4 months. If you are registered for electronic prescribing the prescription will automatically go to your nominated pharmacy. If you are not registered for electronic prescribing the prescription will be waiting for you to collect from your usual Ridge surgery. Read the leaflet that comes with the treatment for a full list of possible side-effects and cautions. Please let us know if you think you may be allergic to this treatment before using it.

Once you have completed the course there is NO need for a further blood test, but it is recommended that you increase your consumption of foods high in folic acid (see above). You may also like to take a multivitamin tablet daily to prevent your levels becoming low again in the future. A prescription is not required for this and you can buy multivitamins from most pharmacies and supermarkets for little cost.

More information can be found on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk