



Understanding Low Folate

Folate (vitamin B9) — what it does, why it drops, and how we put it right

Recover • Rebalance • Revive



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PATIENT GUIDE

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Low folate is common — and simple to put right.


Folate — vitamin B9 — helps your body build healthy red blood cells and make new DNA. When it runs low you can feel tired and run-down, much like low iron or B12. The good news: it's usually easy to diagnose and to treat.

 **Vitamin B9**
the other name for folate


 **Blood & DNA**
needed to build both

 **Treatable**
tablets and food restore it


Why might my folate be low?

 **Not enough in your diet**
Folate comes mainly from greens, beans, citrus and wholegrains. Low intake is the commonest cause.


- More likely if: few vegetables, or lots of processed food.

 **Your body needs more**
Pregnancy and breastfeeding sharply increase how much folate you need.


- Pregnant or planning? Folic acid is especially important.

 **Trouble absorbing it**
Coeliac disease and other gut conditions can stop folate being taken in properly.


- More likely if: tummy symptoms or a known gut condition.

 **Alcohol**
Regular drinking lowers folate — it reduces absorption and speeds up how fast you lose it.

- More likely if: alcohol intake is on the higher side.

 **Some medicines**
Methotrexate and some anti-epileptic medicines can lower folate levels.

- More likely if: on long-term medicines that affect folate.

 **Higher turnover**
Some blood and skin conditions use up folate faster than usual.

- Your GP will consider this if relevant to you.

Why we check your B12 before treating folate

Low folate and low B12 cause very similar blood changes, and they often travel together. Treating folate alone can 'tidy up' the blood while a hidden B12 problem quietly continues — which can affect the nerves. So we check both, and sort B12 first if needed. It's a simple step that keeps you safe.



Folate-friendly foods & habits

1

Eat your greens

Broccoli, spinach, peas, Brussels sprouts

2

Beans & citrus

Lentils, chickpeas, oranges & berries

3

Cook gently

Folate is lost in long boiling — steam or stir-fry

4

Mind the alcohol

Cutting back helps your folate recover

See your GP if you also have:

- Tiredness that lingers or is getting worse
- Breathlessness, palpitations or looking pale
- A sore or smooth tongue, or mouth ulcers
- Numbness or tingling (we'll check your B12)
- You're pregnant, or planning a pregnancy
- Tummy symptoms suggesting absorption trouble

What your GP can do

- ✓ Confirm low folate with a simple blood test
- ✓ Check your B12 and iron at the same time
- ✓ Prescribe folic acid tablets — usually a short course
- ✓ Look for a cause, such as coeliac disease
- ✓ Advise on folate-rich foods for the long term
- ✓ Recheck your bloods to confirm it's recovered

Worth noting before your appointment

- ✓ How long you've felt tired, and how it's changed
- ✓ What a typical week of meals looks like
- ✓ Your alcohol intake, honestly — it helps us help you
- ✓ Any tummy or bowel symptoms
- ✓ Whether you're pregnant or planning to be
- ✓ All medicines and supplements you take

A few days of meals

Jot down roughly what you eat for a few days — it helps us see whether diet is the likely cause and tailor the advice to you.

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5

An easy one to fix

Low folate is common, easily treated, and usually nothing to worry about.

We'll find why it dropped, put it right, and check it's stayed up. — Dr Regu