

216,600

annual cases of spina bifida and anencephaly occur worldwide that can be





Folic acid (vitamin B9) prevents spina bifida F and anencephaly F



Only about 60 countries have mandatory folic acid fortification policy for wheat flour, maize flour, and/or rice. This is preventing just 23% of all folic acidpreventable spina bifida and anencephaly worldwide.



Food fortification with folic acid is...



Effective everywhere

Safe for everyone





Food fortification with folic acid is highly cost saving





There is a need for a World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution supporting large-scale food fortification with folic acid.

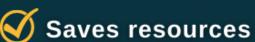
A WHA resolution will accelerate fortification policy and help countries reach their 2030 Sustainable Development Goals on child mortality and health equity.

Be a champion for folic acid fortification



Saves lives





























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A World Health **Assembly Resolution:**

Folic Acid Fortification to Prevent Spina Bifida



WHA75 SIDE EVENT

Geneva, May 24th 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM Hilton Geneva Hotel & **Conference Centre**

> Route Francois-Peyrot 34 Geneva, 1218, Switzerland







63rd World Health Recognizing the Assembly's Resolution on Birth Defects that appealed to member states to prioritize prevention defects, of birth we are concerned the high number by affected by folic acidpregnancies preventable spina bifida and anencephaly globally.

World-wide at least 300,000 pregnancies are estimated to be affected with spina bifida and anencephaly annually, and 75% of them result in elective terminations, stillbirths, or under-five deaths. Those who survive have life-long paralysis and neurologic impairment; most require multiple surgeries, unavailable in low- and middle-income countries. Families face stigma and cannot afford the cost of care.

Folic acid fortification is the most effective public health strategy to prevent spina bifida and anencephaly equitably in the population. Fortified staple foods provide folic acid to women of reproductive age at a critical time in pregnancy, preventing spina bifida and anencephaly.

Mandatory food fortification with adequate folic acid has been implemented in 58 countries since the late 1990s. Folic acid fortification is safe, effective, and has high cost-benefit ratio. Yet, over 100 countries lack this intervention, adversely impacting the most vulnerable populations.

This side event will bring together key stakeholders, including policymakers, patient care leaders, NGOs, and member states, to discuss a way forward toward a WHA resolution on folic acid fortification to prevent spina bifida.

Program

Registration & Mingling	6.00PM
Welcome & Introductions Gail Rosseau, MD - <i>G4 Alliance</i> Luz De Regil, PhD - <i>WHO</i>	6.30PM
Spina bifida: a patient perspective Nebiyat Tesfaye, MD <i>ReachAnother Foundation</i>	6.35PM
Spina bifida and anencephaly: treatment, impact, and consequence Rick Boop, MD St Jude Children's Research Hospital	6.40PM
Epidemiology of spina bifida and anencephaly: a global public health concern in need of prevention Vijaya Kancherla, PhD Emory University - Center for Spina Bifida F	6.50PM Prevention
Folic acid fortification – the safe and effective action towards spina bifida prevention Helena Pachón, PhD Food Fortification Initiative	7.00PM
A public-private-civil society partnership for science-based advoc Sylvia Roozen, PhD International Federation for Spina Bific and Hydrocephalus	,
Moderated Q&A and panel discussion	7.20PM
The WHA Resolution German Escobar <i>Vice-Minister of Health, Colombia</i>	7.40PM
Call to Action	7.45PM
Adjourn to refreshments and individual discussion	7.50PM