

## New consultation on fortification of flour with folic acid

Many of us will have seen patients in clinical practice who have presented with spina bifida, a type of neural tube defect. There are several different types of spina bifida including myelomeningocele, meningocele, and spina bifida occulta. It is the latter form, spina bifida occulta (SBO) which is the most common form “where one or more vertebra don’t form properly”<sup>1</sup>. According to Shine, a charity providing help and support to patients with all forms of spina bifida, estimates vary but between 5-10% of the population may have SBO and some may be unaware of it<sup>2</sup>.

At present the UK government and the devolved administrations are holding a consultation to gather views about the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid. This would make it a legal requirement for producers to add folic acid to flour with the aim of helping to reduce neural tube defects in foetuses by raising the folate levels of women who may become pregnant. Further information concerning the consultation can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adding-folic-acid-to-flour/proposal-to-add-folic-acid-to-flour-consultation-document>

1. NHS Choices: Spina Bifida <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/spina-bifida/> (Accessed 25-06-2019)
2. Shine charity <https://www.shinecharity.org.uk/spina-bifida/types-of-spina-bifida>