

Folic acid in flour

SIR - It is with delight that I welcome the mandatory addition of the vitamin folic acid to all flour (report, October 15), to prevent children being born with spina bifida and other neural tube defects (NTDs). This is long overdue.

The link between poor maternal diet and such defects had been known since the end of the war, when these problems showed up in babies born to Dutch women who starved during the grim winter of 1944-45.

When I was a health minister in the Eighties, with responsibility for public health and prevention of disease, the Medical Research Council's trial was already under way. Had the results been published while I was still in post they would have been implemented.

It is estimated that, had we acted sooner, some 2,000 fewer babies would have been born with NTDs, and many pregnancies would not have been terminated. Ministers need to read well-conducted research, accept its findings and act upon it.

Edwina Currie Jones
Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire

A Tel. 16.10.2018