Atkins Diet Worries March of Dimes

By ACSH Staff — March 4, 2004

The nation’s supermarkets and restaurants seem to have been transformed overnight into one immense promotional campaign for the (scientifically unproven) Atkins diet plan: cutting carbohydrates. The truth is that virtually any plan to cut calories while maintaining or increasing exercise will cause weight loss, not just one magical mix of food types. But there may be a worse problem with Atkins than the annoying hype and the distraction from calorie-cutting: It may diminish the amount of folic acid women get.

Folic acid aids proper fetal growth and may also reduce arterial blockages and cancer risk. However, reported the Wall Street Journal's Amy Dockser Marcus this week, groups such as the March of Dimes, which works to combat birth defects, have had a hard time getting women of reproductive age to boost their folic acid intake, and:

Nancy Green, the medical director of the March of Dimes...says the foundation is also worried about the growing popularity of low-carbohydrate diets and the potential that women may not be getting as much folic acid as they need if they give up enriched cereal and bread. "It's hard to know what the effect of these low-carb diets is going to be, but we're very nervous about this," she says.