

Drafting a Public Service Announcement

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are either general messages or specific announcements for radio and television. PSAs can be 15, 30 or 60 seconds in length. Most often you can write the PSA yourself, without formal production in advance, and submit it to your local radio or television station and they will read it on air.

Sometimes, you can add the telephone number of your organization to a PSA and announce a community event. PSAs are more likely to be aired if the station's program director is asked in person by someone in his or her community to play them.

When writing a PSA:

- Provide a contact name, phone number and e-mail address.
- Include word-for-word written text approximately eight (8) to 15 lines in length.
- Include a beginning date and an ending date (to identify the duration of time the PSA is to be aired). A maximum of three months is a good idea.
- Send PSAs for radio and television at least three to four weeks in advance.

When calling:

- The best time to call is Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday morning. Avoid calling on a Friday or just before or after a holiday.
- Ask to speak with the person who schedules PSAs – not the general manager, sales manager or news director. Ask for his or her help in preventing neural tube defects (NTDs) in their community. Tell that person who you are trying to reach and ask if the PSA can be aired when more women are likely to be listening or watching.
- In two minutes, give your name and the name of your organization and specify if it is nonprofit; describe your event in a single sentence, and sell your PSA knowing it is competing with other announcements. Emphasize your goal: to prevent birth defects in your community.
- Send a thank you note regardless of whether your PSA is accepted. If you are not successful, try again in a few weeks.



Spirit. Breakthrough & Hope

Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus
Association of Ontario

Sample FREE Radio and TV PSAs

Length: 15 seconds

Title: "Did you know? #1"

ANNOUNCER: Did you know that neural tube defects occur before most women even know they're pregnant?

Folic acid helps reduce the risk of neural tube defects by as much as 70%.

If you're a woman, talk to your doctor about folic acid or visit www.folicacid.ca today.

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Sample FREE Radio and TV PSAs

Length: 30 seconds

Title: "Did you know? #2"

ANNOUNCER: Did you know that neural tube defects occur before most women even know they're pregnant?

Folic acid, a B vitamin, helps reduce the risk of neural tube defects by as much as 70%.

As long as it is taken before conception.

And since almost half of all Canadian pregnancies are unplanned, all women should be taking a multivitamin with 0.4 milligrams of folic acid.

If you're a woman, talk to your doctor about folic acid or visit www.folicacid.ca.

Folic acid. It's never too early.

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If you have funding to produce a radio or TV script, below are two samples you can work with. Consider approaching a local college and asking if its students can produce some scripts for you. If not, the local radio or television station may be interested in producing it for a nominal fee.



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Sample Radio and TV PSAs for Production

Radio PSA

Length: 30 seconds

Title: "Two friends and a vitamin"

SFX: *Kitchen morning sounds. Kettle whistling, cupboards opening and closing.*

WOMAN A: Whatcha doin'?

WOMAN B: Taking my multivitamin.

WOMAN A: I get my vitamins from what I eat.

WOMAN B: You think you do, but the truth is we can't get enough folic acid from food to reduce the risk of neural tube defects in babies.

WOMAN A: Who's having a baby?

WOMAN B: No one – yet. But both of us can, and almost half of all Canadian pregnancies are unplanned.

WOMAN A: Well, if I get pregnant, I'll take folic acid then.

WOMAN B: Too late. Neural tube defects happen before you even know you're pregnant.

WOMAN A: So what's the name of that multivitamin again?

ANNOUNCER: If you're a woman, talk to your doctor about folic acid or visit folicacid.ca today.

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Sample Radio and TV PSAs for Production

Radio PSA

Length: 60 seconds

Title: "My name is Susan Smith"

ANNOUNCER: My name is Susan Smith and my daughter has spina bifida, a neural tube defect that effects every day of her life. She has trouble walking and suffers from some paralysis.

Neural tube defects occur when the brain and spinal cord fail to develop properly.

Folic acid, a B vitamin, reduces the risk of neural tube defects by as much as 70%.

But it has to be taken prior to conception, because neural tube defects occur before most women even know they're pregnant.

Women should take a daily multivitamin containing at least 0.4 milligrams of folic acid.

I wish I'd known about folic acid. I wish someone had told me.

If you're a woman who could become pregnant, talk to your doctor about folic acid or visit www.folicacid.ca.

Folic acid. It's never too early.

Brought to you by The Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario.



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Sample Radio and TV PSAs for Production

TV PSA

Length: 30 seconds

Title: "My daughter has spina bifida"

VISUAL: *Black background screen. Susan Smith sitting on a stool, speaking directly to the camera.*

SUSAN: My name is Susan Smith and my daughter has a neural tube defect called spina bifida. It makes it difficult for her to walk properly and has caused some paralysis.

Folic acid, a B vitamin, can reduce the risk of neural tube defects by as much as 70%. But it has to be taken prior to conception, because neural tube defects happen before most women even know they're pregnant.

If you're a woman who could become pregnant, talk to your doctor about folic acid or visit www.folicacid.ca today.

SUPER: www.folicacid.ca

SUSAN: Folic acid. It's never too early.

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