

Abstract

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Folates: supplemental forms and therapeutic applications.

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BACKGROUND: Folates function as a single carbon donor in the synthesis of serine from glycine, in the synthesis of nucleotides from purine precursors, indirectly in the synthesis of transfer RNA, and as a methyl donor to create methylcobalamin, which is used in the re-methylation of homocysteine to methionine. Oral folates are generally available in two supplemental forms, folic acid and folinic acid. Administration of folinic acid bypasses the deconjugation and reduction steps required for folic acid. Folinic acid also appears to be a more metabolically active form of folate, capable of boosting levels of the coenzyme forms of the vitamin in circumstances where folic acid has little to no effect.

DISCUSSION: Therapeutically, folic acid can reduce homocysteine levels and the occurrence of neural tube defects, might play a role in preventing cervical dysplasia and protecting against neoplasia in ulcerative colitis, appears to be a rational aspect of a nutritional protocol to treat vitiligo, and can increase the resistance of the gingiva to local irritants, leading to a reduction in inflammation.

SUMMARY: Reports also indicate that neuropsychiatric diseases secondary to folate deficiency might include dementia, schizophrenia-like syndromes, insomnia, irritability, forgetfulness, endogenous depression, organic psychosis, peripheral neuropathy, myelopathy, and restless legs syndrome.

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