

Excerpt

Feeling down? Maybe your brain is saying “Feed me!”.
Feeding your brain with specific medical foods can reduce depression.

Article

Treating Depression and Folate Deficiency **With Medical Foods**

by Alicia Sparks

“Can we feed the brain to regulate mood disorders?”

If you had no experience with or knowledge of medical foods (meant for nutritional or dietary management of specific diseases), you might mistakenly think we are talking about feeding the brain – and our bodies – with *actual food* rather than taking a special medication which is doctor-prescribed for the management of a specific disease state.

A medical food that includes L-methylfolate, the only active form of folate that can cross the blood brain barrier and help with the synthesis of the neurotransmitters associated with mood and, consequently, mood disorders such as depression: serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine.

Research shows that people with depression and low folate levels are less likely to respond to treatments such as antidepressants and less likely to achieve remission.

Unfortunately, a smorgasbord of factors can contribute to low folate levels – genetics, age, lifestyle choices like poor diets and smoking, certain medications like anticonvulsants, oral contraceptives, and lithium, and certain illnesses like Crohn’s disease, hypothyroidism, and diabetes, just to name a few.

Well, that makes sense, right? I mean, if you need folate to help synthesize the neurotransmitters, and you don’t have enough folate, the neurotransmitters won’t be properly synthesized and your depression – even with the assistance of antidepressants – probably won’t get better. Or, at least, the chances of you getting better – and staying better for longer periods of time – will be decreased.

What *doesn’t* make sense is why folic acid and natural forms of folate (the kind you can get from green vegetables, for example) wouldn’t work just as well?

In other words, *why do we need yet another pill?*

Well, as it turns out, folic acid (which is a man-made product and can actually *block* L-methylfolate from crossing the blood brain barrier) has to go through a four-step process throughout our bodies before our brains can use it. Natural folate from green vegetables has to go through a three-step process. When time is of the essence, as it often is in cases of severe depression and other mood disorders, these three- and four-step processes just aren't quick enough.

Combine the time problem with the fact that many people *can't* make the necessary changes in order to increase folate (for example, people taking anticonvulsants aren't likely to stop just because they need more folate, people with Crohn's disease and diabetes face nutritional challenges they can *manage* but not *eliminate*, and elderly people can't turn back the clock) *and* the fact that Deplin is immediately put to use once absorbed, and the "need" for yet another pill might not leave such a bad taste in the mouth.

Reference: <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2009/10/15/treating-depression-and-folate-deficiency-with-medical-foods/>