



Awakenings Mental Health

L-Methylfolate

What is L-Methylfolate?

L-methylfolate is the active, bioavailable form of folate (Vitamin B9). Unlike standard folic acid found in fortified foods and many supplements, L-methylfolate can directly cross the blood-brain barrier. Its primary role in the brain is to act as a crucial building block for the synthesis of key neurotransmitters: serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, which are all essential for regulating mood.

The MTHFR Gene & Mental Health

Many people have a common genetic variation in the MTHFR gene. This variation reduces the body's ability to convert dietary folate or synthetic folic acid into the active L-methylfolate. This inefficiency can lead to lower levels of essential neurotransmitters, which can contribute to depressive symptoms and make traditional antidepressant medications less effective.

Uses & Benefits in Depression

L-methylfolate is classified as a medical food, prescribed by a provider to manage depression. It is most effective in specific situations

Adjunctive Therapy:

It is often used as an "add-on" to a standard antidepressant. By providing the necessary building blocks, it can significantly boost the effectiveness of the primary medication.

Treatment-Resistant Depression:

It is particularly helpful for individuals who have not found adequate relief from one or more antidepressant trials.

MTHFR Support:

For those with a known MTHFR gene variation, it directly addresses the metabolic issue, providing the brain with the active folate it needs.

Dosage:

L-methylfolate is typically prescribed in daily doses of 7.5 mg or 15 mg.

Safety:

It is generally well-tolerated with minimal side effects.

Important Note:

L-methylfolate should not be confused with over-the-counter folic acid, which is not effective for this purpose in individuals with the MTHFR variation.

Conclusion

For many individuals, L-methylfolate is a critical piece of the mental health puzzle. By supporting the brain's production of mood-regulating chemicals, it serves as a safe and effective tool in your comprehensive treatment plan.