

L-Methylfolate

L-methylfolate (Deplin, MethylPro) is a folate vitamin that has unique effects on the brain, where it is used to help produce neurotransmitters involved in mood (serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine). Up to 70% of people with depression have limited abilities to produce this vitamin.

L-methylfolate is not an antidepressant; it is a vitamin that provides necessary dietary support so you can respond more fully to an antidepressant. L-methylfolate treats many kinds of depression and has been found particularly effective in people with depression who are overweight (BMI > 30).

There are several reasons why your body may not produce enough L-methylfolate:

Genetic: a gene called MTHFR c-677t can prevent the body from turning folate into L-methylfolate. It occurs in 10-12% of the population and is more common in people of Mediterranean or Hispanic descent.

Age: L-methylfolate levels decrease with age.

Illness: diabetes, atrophic gastritis, Crohn's, colitis, renal failure and hypothyroidism.

Lifestyle: smoking, excessive alcohol and poor nutrition can lower L-methylfolate.

Medications: certain seizure medicines (e.g. phenytoin, carbamazepine, primidone, phenobarbital, lamotrigine, valproate), methotrexate, sulphasalazine, oral contraceptives, metformin, fluoxetine, niacin, fenofibrates and warfarin can lower L-methylfolate.

How To Take It

L-methylfolate can be taken morning or night, with or without food. The benefits usually take effect within 2-4 weeks.

Important: do not take regular folate (or folic acid) supplements with L-methylfolate, as they can prevent its absorption in the brain. Check your multivitamin to see if it contains folate.

Cost and Insurance Coverage

Sometimes insurance does not cover L-methylfolate, in which case the lowest-cost option is to use the specialized pharmacy for MethylPro (see order sheet on back; part #00801). L-methylfolate is available over-the-counter but not in the dosages the brain needs for depression (around 15mg).

There may be a discounted pharmacy program through the manufacturer as well (www.deplin.com).

If unable to afford MethylPro, you can try taking regular folate at a dose of 1-2mg daily (available over-the-counter). Several controlled trials have found that folate makes antidepressants work better, and may work as well for you as L-methylfolate. Keep in mind to stop the regular folate if you start taking L-methylfolate.

Side Effects

96% of people find L-methylfolate very tolerable, and it has been found to reduce the side effects to antidepressants. L-methylfolate had the same rate of side effects as a sugar pill, and was not associated with weight gain, fatigue, insomnia, or sexual dysfunction.

—Chris Aiken, M.D., updated 6/7/2015

