The Incredible Impacts of Phenylalanine on Focus and Mood Transcript

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Why Phenylalanine Gets Overlooked

I got a question about the amino acid phenol alanine and why we don't hear more about that in the biogenic amine space because I seem to talk about that a lot here on the channel. So let's dive into that.

Hey, I'm Dr. A. I've been teaching and researching and writing and practicing for many decades in the integrative and naturopathic medicine space. And this is a real common area that we talk a lot about because you can sometimes support people in their nervous system function and other functions through the use of amino acid therapies. So they're very popular.

Amino Acids & Nervous System Support

Fennel alanine is an amino acid that some people will take but it sort of gets overshadowed sometimes by its cousin tyrrosine because they tend to work in the same pathway. So why would we have fennel alanine and tyrrosine in the same pathway from a biological point of view? And would it make any difference if I took fennel alanine versus tyrrosine to help out with the neurological or biogenic things that those amino acids do. So let's get into that. So I talk about this all the time.

Just the short version. An amino acid is the smallest divisible molecular step in making peptides. And then you make a lot of peptides become protein. So that's the first thing. They're a piece of a peptide or piece of protein. The next thing is that fennel alanine can be used for a number of things.

Phenylalanine vs Tyrosine Explained

But in a biogenic amine area, it is actually a precursor to a couple of other steps. One of which is very famous being tyrrosine. So it comes before tyrrosine.

And then tyrrosine goes on to make dopamine and norepinephrine. We call those the catakolamines.

Catecholamines: Dopamine & Norepinephrine

Now, if you want to be uber specific, in the peripheral nervous system, we also make epinephrine there. Mostly in the central nervous system, it's dopamine and norepinephrine. So, I could put tyrrosine in. We got a lot of tyrrosine content because people ask a lot of questions about that and help out with my catakolamines. And then I could also go upstream one and put fennel alanine in. So, why would there be a difference?

Would I want to do that? Would it make any difference for me?

Should You Take Phenylalanine or Tyrosine?

So the first thing is that yes fennel alanine if you raise your fennel alanine levels by supplementing with the amino acid fennol alanine you will have a downstream effect of increasing tyrrosine and usually dopamine and norepinephrine. A lot of people then would say well clinically speaking why don't we cut out the middle amino acid you know upstream and just give people tyrrosine and not worry about the upstream phenol alanine.

Well, for some people we certainly do that cuz it's more direct. But a lot of the charts that you see and now of course you know with the internet you can look up you know fennel alanine tyrrosine metabolism you'll find you know 100 different images and they all have little differences sometimes.

When Phenylalanine Works Better Than Tyrosine

Fennel alanine also has some fates biologically that are not the same as tyrrosine. And so in some people, especially people in chronic pain where they might need catakolamine support, but they also have chronic pain, fennel alanine will help them more with the chronic pain and catakolamine support than just giving tyrrosine alone would.

In some people if they have a lot of like inattentive you know ADHD spectrum that sort of thing a lot of problems there then they will sometimes need to use both some phenolanine some tyrrosine to satisfy all of the main and collateral pathways.

Chronic Pain, Fatigue, and Focus Support

So the time that I often think clinically to use fennel alanine is in somebody with sort of a mixed case where yes they appear to have some need for extra catacolamines maybe due to focus etc maybe chronic fatigue all sorts of things but also they have a layer of a chronic pain syndrome and it's not to say that phenol alanine will make the person's chronic pain go away but it can decrease their pain scores.

So in a mixed case like that where there's some chronic pain and maybe some fatigue and focus issues I may start with phenol alanine see how they do for a month mess with the dose a little bit and then transition them and if they're still needing more help with the mental focus part I might add some tyrrosine in.

Using One vs Both Amino Acids

So what would be the clinical benefit to just doing one or the other or a mix? The first thing is the less pills a person has to take the more likely they are to do it. So if I can get the job done with just fennel alanine or just tyrrosine it's better to just use one. But as I say people are chronically ill if there's a pain component and it comes with a inattentive or a fatigue component I'll try phenol alanine alone and if that's not enough I'll add tyrrosine or sometimes vice versa if there's just the fatigue and the inattention component but in some people they will wind up needing both.

Safety, Stimulants, and Medications

Now the next question that comes up here is well if these things are triggering to the catakolamine formation in the body are there any safety issues that we want to consider?

Well the first thing would be if you start to take them and this is when we give dosing advice to people. We always say look if you start to take these and you feel shaky or like you drank a pot of coffee over kind of overrevd or something that's a too much of a dose for you. So regardless of what we told you to start out at, you're going to have to back off on the dose. Give us a call. The next thing is if you're on any catakolamine manipulating drugs, you should only take catakolamine upstream amino acids in concert with a prescriber who is used to doing both. Catakolamine manipulating drugs might be for people say with Parkinson's disease. That's one area. But the big area that they're used are the stimulant drug strategies which are often used in the ADD ADHD spectrum.

So the stimulant category of drugs again you could see if I have a drug that's holding on to catakolamines in the syninnapse you know like a lot of the stimulant drugs do and then I put in a whole bunch more phenol alanine or tyrrosine maybe I would get too much and I'd feel overstimulated. So, if you're working and you're trying to in concert with stimulant drugs or Parkinson drugs, etc., you want to make sure that you're letting your prescriber know and asking their advice about that.

Dosing, Tolerance, and Side Effects

But let's say there's no drugs being used and you're just using it to try and help with fatigue, focus, maybe pain. People and their tolerance for fennel alanine is all over the map. Some people, we usually have them do a test dose at 500 milligrams in the morning. Normally, people will say that's fine and they might go to a,000 or more milligs. We'll have them ramp up until they feel it and get some effect, not not shakiness and all that, but you know,

some effect in their brain. And then sometimes after a few months, they take less and less because they're getting, you know, more saturated in the nervous system. If you reach a dose that makes you feel over caffeinated or you're not sleeping well or you're jittery or something like that, then you really want to make sure that you talk to whoever is helping you with prescribing of it and back off on the dose.

Timing, Absorption, and Best Use

The final thing is more of a practical matter and that is with amino acids they are absorbed into the blood directly with transporters. There's amino acid transporters but the more amino acids that are in the digestive tract at the same time the more competition there is. So you will get a different effect usually from say 1,000 milligs of fennyl alanine if you take it on its own with a glass of water glass of juice or something versus if you take the fennol alanine along with a big high protein meal. Why would that be? Because you're now trying to digest and absorb all of this other amino acid from the high protein meal. It's going to decrease the amount of foline from the supplement that gets into your system.

So when we're trying to do these things therapeutically, usually we'll do the stimulating ones in the morning. So I have people do their fenoline like at uh when they first wake up and before lunch or maybe just when they first wake up.

Generally we don't have people do it at night time. Some people tolerate it, but most people will keep them awake. All right, I hope that answers the foliing question.

Final Thoughts on Phenylalanine

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