

# Abstract

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## Folate and brain function in the elderly.

D'Anci KE, Rosenberg IH.

Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

**PURPOSE OF REVIEW:** Over the past several decades, folate has emerged as an important nutrient in several key conditions of concern to the elderly. Subclinical levels of folate inadequacy can have significant negative impacts on health in older individuals.

**RECENT FINDINGS:** Serum and red blood cell folate levels are associated with depression in younger individuals, but the relationship is less clear in older people. However, folate status does predict response to antidepressant treatment in older individuals. Cognitive decline and some forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, are associated with lower folate levels. Supplementation with folic acid can provide cognitive benefits in some circumstances. Folic acid supplementation is generally regarded as safe; however, there remains some concern that high levels of folic acid may exacerbate the neurological consequences of a vitamin B12 deficiency.

**SUMMARY:** Evidence for the role of folate in depression and dementia in the aged is increasing, although there remains much about mechanisms to be determined.

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