Abstract


Riboflavin Deficiency in Rats Decreases de novo Formate Production but Does Not Affect Plasma Formate Concentration.

MacMillan L, Lamarre SG, daSilva RP, Jacobs RL, Brosnan ME, Brosnan JT.

Department of Biochemistry, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada; Department of Biology, University of Moncton, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Sciences, Alberta Diabetes Institute, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

BACKGROUND: The one-carbon metabolism pathway is highly dependent on a number of B vitamins in order to provide one-carbon units for purine and thymidylate biosynthesis as well as homocysteine remethylation. Previous studies have examined folate and vitamin B-12 deficiency and their effects on formate metabolism; as of yet, to our knowledge, no studies on the effects of riboflavin deficiency on formate metabolism have been published.

OBJECTIVE: Our objective was to determine the effects of riboflavin deficiency on formate metabolism.

METHODS: Weanling male rats were randomly assigned either to control, riboflavin-replete (RR) or to experimental, riboflavin-deficient (RD) versions of the AIN-93G diet for 13 d, at which time a constant infusion of [$^{13}$C]-formate was carried out to ascertain the effects of deficiency on formate production. Gas chromatography-mass spectrometry was used to measure plasma formate concentration and [$^{13}$C]-formate enrichment. HPLC, LC-mass spectrometry (MS)/MS, and enzymatic assays were used for the measurement of one-carbon precursors and other metabolites.

RESULTS: RD rats had significantly lower rates of formate production (15%) as well as significantly reduced hepatic methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase activity (69%) and protein concentration (54%) compared with RR rats. There was no difference in plasma formate concentrations between the groups. Plasma serine, a potential one-carbon precursor, was significantly higher in RD rats (467 ± 73 μM) than in RR rats (368 ± 52 μM).

CONCLUSIONS: Although deficiencies in folate and vitamin B-12 lead to major changes in plasma formate concentrations, riboflavin deficiency results in no significant difference; this disagrees with the prediction of a published mathematical model. Our observation of a lower rate of formate production is consistent with a role for flavoproteins in this process.

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