

Health Promotion & Disease Prevention

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“Low Glutathione Levels and Mental Health”

Recent studies have shown that individuals with psychiatric disorders are also deficient in glutathione.

What is glutathione? Glutathione (or GSH) is the master of all antioxidants and is present in every cell in the body. It is a small protein molecule composed of 3 amino acids: [cysteine](#), [glutamate](#), and [glycine](#) called GSH precursors or building blocks.

Research is suggesting that oxidative stress may be a factor underlying the physiology of many mental disorders. In a study published in the July, 2010 issue of the *International Journal of Neuropsychopharmacology* researchers did postmortem exams of the prefrontal cortex from patients with psychiatric disorders. They found that the levels of total glutathione were significantly decreased in all psychiatric conditions compared to the control group, and that individuals with these types of mental disorders may be more susceptible to oxidative stress and free radical damage. A 2009 study published in *Trends in Pharmacological Sciences* indicated that free radical-related oxidative stress is likely to be one of the leading causes of the underlying mechanisms contributing to the development of mental illness including clinical depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Next: What foods are the building blocks to glutathione?

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