

Inositol: An Important Nutrient For OCD, Anxiety and Depression

February 6, 2024 Jordan Fallis

The nutrient that I want to talk about today isn't very well known.

But it has helped me manage OCD, **anxiety** and **depression** over the years, especially after I **weened off psychiatric medication**.

It's called inositol, or myo-inositol.

Inositol is a non-essential vitamin and naturally-occurring compound in the body. It's structurally similar to glucose and small amounts of it can be found in **food**.

Researchers extracted and isolated it in 1849, but it wasn't until the 1980s that they discovered high levels of it in the central nervous system, and found that it plays a key role in **neurotransmission** (1, 4).

Studies show that it can **increase GABA-A receptor function** and enhance serotonin receptor sensitivity, working similarly to **anti-anxiety (benzodiazepines) and antidepressant (SSRIs) medications** (2-3, 5).

Inositol levels in the brain have also been shown to be lower in people with several neuropsychiatric conditions (30).

Considering this, it's not too surprising that researchers have found that supplementing with it can help treat **anxiety** and **depression**.

If you have one of the following anxious and depressive conditions, inositol could help you.



Inositol and Depression

First of all, researchers have found reduced levels of inositol in the spinal fluid of **depressed** patients (14).

They've also found significantly less inositol in brain samples of suicide victims (16).

Transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) is a form of neurostimulation that helps treat **depression**, and one of the reasons it works may be because it causes a significant increase in brain **inositol** levels (15).

But you don't need to do tDCS to increase inositol levels in the brain.

Supplementing with inositol has also been shown to increase inositol concentration within the central nervous system and **treat depression** in adults (17):

In one study, 11 people with treatment-resistant **depression** took 6 grams of inositol every day for four weeks, and nine of them experienced major improvements in their mood (18).

Another study had **depressed** patients take 12 grams of inositol every day for four weeks. Researchers found that these **depressed** patients experienced significantly



greater improvements in their depression compared to the patients who took placebo (19, 22).

And people with bipolar disorder who were going through a major depressive episode supplemented with inositol for six weeks, and it led to a 17.4% reduction in their depressive symptoms (20).

Despite all of this research, it's important to point out that I found one meta-analysis concluding that "it is currently unclear whether or not inositol is of benefit in the treatment of depression" (21).

That's not to say it won't work for you though.

In my experience, inositol does help with **depression** – just not with everyone.

If you typically respond to **SSRI antidepressants** (like I do), it's more likely that inositol will help you with your depressive symptoms (23).

If SSRI **antidepressants** don't improve your mood when you take them, it's less likely that inositol will help you.

Overall, it's worth a try though.

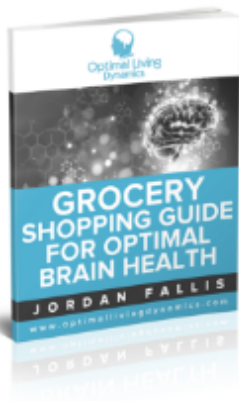
Inositol and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) is a condition in which a woman has severe depressive symptoms, irritability, and tension before menstruation, which disrupts her social and/or occupational life. PMDD symptoms are more severe than symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) (12).

Inositol has been shown to help treat PMDD.

Over the course of six menstrual cycles, women with PMDD supplemented with 12 grams inositol daily, and they experienced a significant reduction in their symptoms of dysphoria and **depression**.

Researchers concluded that they "were able to clearly prove the efficacy of myo-inositol in PMDD" (13).



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Eat For Optimal Mental Health?**

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Inositol and Anxiety, Panic Disorder and Agoraphobia

Based on my research and experience, inositol is better at **reducing anxiety** and treating anxious disorders than **depression**.

Panic disorder is diagnosed in people who experience sudden panic attacks and are preoccupied with the fear of a recurring attack.

Some people stop going into environments in which they previously had a panic attack, anticipating that it will happen again. This is considered agoraphobia. They may avoid public places such as shopping malls, public transportation, or large sports arenas.

Many patients with panic disorder and agoraphobia don't respond well to current treatments, or they **discontinue drugs because of their side effects**.

Luckily, there is research showing that inositol can help treat both of these conditions with little to no side effects.

In one study, researchers compared the effects of inositol to fluvoxamine (Luvox), **an SSRI antidepressant** commonly used in the treatment of panic disorder.

Twenty patients with panic disorder took 18 grams of inositol every day for one month, and then took 150 mg of fluvoxamine every day for another month.



Researchers found that inositol decreased the number of weekly panic attacks per week by four, while fluvoxamine only reduced them by two. Fluvoxamine also had side effects such as nausea and lethargy, and inositol didn't have any side effects (6).

In another study, twenty-one patients with panic disorder (with and without agoraphobia) took 12 grams of inositol daily for four weeks.

Compared to placebo, the frequency and severity of panic attacks, and the severity of agoraphobia, significantly declined after taking inositol. And there were hardly any side effects!

The researchers concluded that inositol is an "attractive therapeutic for panic disorder" (7, 8).

Inositol has also been shown to **reduce anxiety** in children and decrease anxiety-like behaviours in rats (24, 25).

Inositol and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a psychiatric disorder characterized by obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors.

In his book *Nutrient Power*, Dr. William Walsh says he uses inositol with all his patients with **OCD**.

I personally noticed a reduction in my **obsessive-compulsive** tendencies while supplementing with it.

And there is some research to support this.

In one study, patients with **OCD** took 18 grams of inositol or placebo daily for six weeks.

At the end of the six weeks, the patients who took inositol had significantly lower scores on the Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale.

The researchers concluded that inositol can effectively treat **obsessive-compulsive disorder** (9, 10).

Check out **this article for 21 other ways to treat OCD**.

