

Dopamine and New Year's Resolutions

Why is it so hard to change bad habits? Many of us make New Year's Resolutions to lose weight, exercise more, choose healthier foods, etc., but most of us are not able to keep those resolutions in the long term. And what if the behavior that we are hoping to change is actually a significant addiction: alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, sex, over or under eating? These habits offer us immediate and real gratification, and they can be extremely difficult to kick --- but it isn't just about self-control. Neurotransmitter imbalance could be playing a significant role in our cravings and addictions.

Neurotransmitters are chemicals that travel between neurons and communicate information throughout our brain and body. Neurotransmitters influence the way we behave, learn, feel and sleep, and imbalances may contribute to a host of physical and mental-emotional symptoms.

While a variety of neurotransmitters affect our behavior, dopamine is strongly associated with the reward mechanisms in the brain. Drugs like opioids, nicotine and alcohol directly or indirectly target the brain's reward system by flooding the circuit with dopamine. Risky behaviors like gambling and sex addiction also increase dopamine levels. If it feels good, dopamine neurons are probably involved.

The major behaviors dopamine affects are: movement, emotion, cognition, pleasure and motivation.

Too much dopamine may cause or contribute to:

- Increased worry and paranoia

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upcoming
events below

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Upcoming events

Labrix Advanced Workshop
February 9 - 10, 2013
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East Coast Core Training
March 16th, 2013
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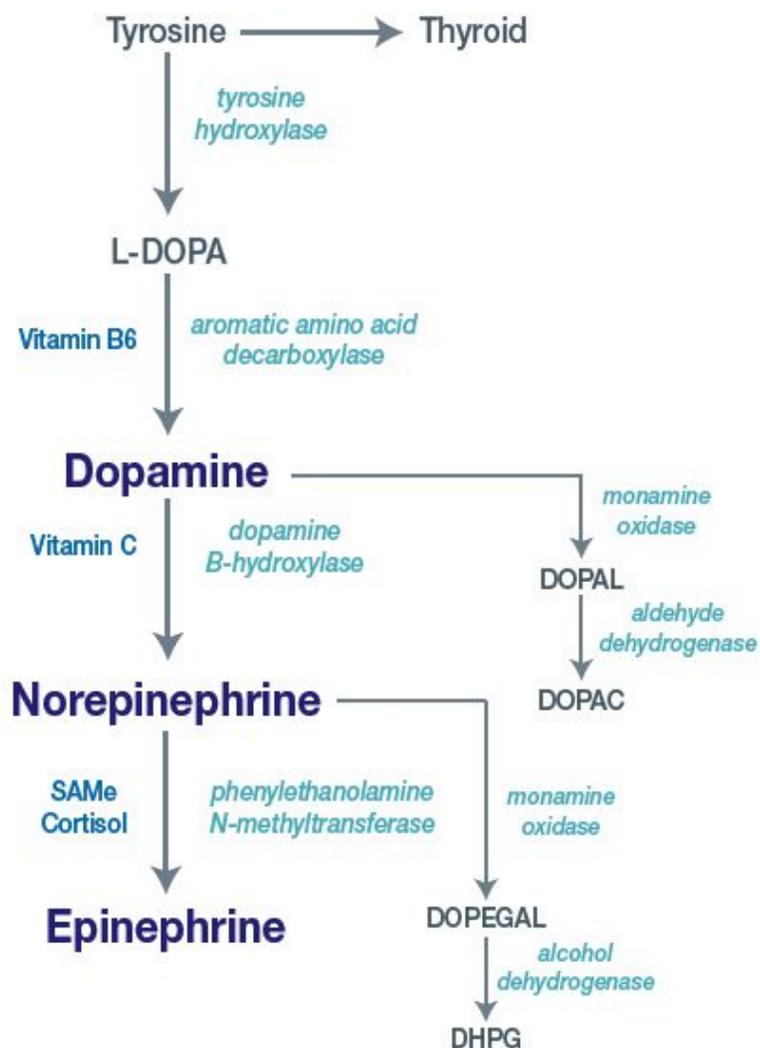
- ADHD
- Decreased ability to interact socially
- Desire for instant gratification

While too little dopamine may cause or contribute to:

- Addiction (to food, drugs, gambling, etc.)
- Movement disorders (i.e. Parkinson's Disease)
- Other pathological states like schizophrenia and autism

As a member of the catecholamine family, dopamine is a precursor to norepinephrine and epinephrine. This means that too much or too little dopamine can also contribute to symptoms associated with norepinephrine and epinephrine imbalance.

Catecholamine (Excitatory) Pathways



Identifying neurotransmitter imbalances and correcting them with nutritional therapies creates a foundation for addressing addiction. Rebalancing neurotransmitters in patients dealing with addictions will help with recovery by encouraging improved sleep, increased energy, lower anxiety, less intense cravings and improved sense of wellbeing.

Labrix is proud to offer simple noninvasive urinary testing that identifies specific neurotransmitter imbalances. These results can also be correlated with salivary cortisol, DHEA, and sex hormones for whole health assessment of your patients.

Resources

- <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/scienceaddiction/drugs-brain>

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