

A molecular model with white and dark grey spheres connected by thin rods is positioned in the upper left corner. Below it, five Erlenmeyer flasks are arranged in a descending arc, each containing a different colored liquid: light blue, green, yellow, dark blue, and red.

Essential Biochemistry for Medicine

Mitchell Fry

ILEY-BLACKWELL



Essential Biochemistry for Medicine

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Essential Biochemistry for Medicine

Preface

To the uninitiated, biochemistry is a complex and intricate subject, but importantly it is a subject that underpins the biosciences, including medicine. As a university lecturer, and by training a biochemist, I have taught my subject to both ‘my own’ students, and to those on allied degree schemes and pre-clinical medicine. Of course, the lines so conveniently drawn (for teaching purposes) between the different bio-disciplines are very artificial; there is far more commonality than difference between these subjects. As a biochemist I am pleased to see the subject have such eminence, and rightly so, but at the same time it should not be delivered as a *fate accompli*, but rather as an aid to understand and clarify, a foundation to build upon and allow explanation. When I set out to write this book, it was not my intention to write a ‘biochemistry’ text, nor a ‘medical’ text, but rather something that provided a more complete picture. This is not meant to be a reference work, but rather a companion, and hopefully one that accurately reflects the type, depth and amount of biochemistry that is appropriate for medical and biomedical undergraduate students alike.

Essential Biochemistry for Medicine should provide a useful and helpful supplement to lectures and workshops, a biochemical–physiological–medical continuum, full of numerous medical examples, additional factual material and FOCUS sections on some favourite medical topics. I have tried to keep the book simply presented but packed with information, and it contains a full index to aid quick navigation. Indeed, it may be the only biochemistry book you need.

Mitch Fry

Contents

Preface	xv
1 Nutritional requirements	1
1.1 Carbohydrates and sugars	1
1.2 Glycogen	2
1.3 Glycaemic index	3
1.4 Lipids	3
1.5 Proteins and amino acids	6
1.6 Biological value	7
1.7 Other energy sources	7
1.8 Vitamins	8
1.9 Minerals	11
2 Metabolism and energy	13
2.1 A metabolic strategy	13
2.2 Carbohydrate metabolism (catabolic)	14
2.3 Glycolysis	15
2.4 Tricarboxylic acid cycle (TCA cycle – Krebs cycle – citric acid cycle)	17
2.5 Oxidative phosphorylation	17
2.6 Brown adipose tissue and heat generation	17
2.7 Glycogenolysis	18
2.8 Carbohydrate metabolism (anabolic)	20
2.9 Gluconeogenesis	20
2.10 Glycogenesis	20
2.11 Fatty acid catabolism	22
2.12 Amino acid catabolism	23
2.13 Blood glucose homeostasis	24
2.14 Glucokinase and hexokinase	27
2.15 Glucose transporters	27

2.16	Diabetes mellitus	28
2.17	Type 1 diabetes	29
2.18	Type 2 diabetes	30
2.19	Insulin/Glucagon effects on metabolism	32
2.20	Hyperglycaemia and associated pathology	33
2.21	Glycation	33
2.22	The polyol pathway	35
3	Regulating body weight	37
3.1	Obesity	37
3.2	Weight regulation	37
3.3	Controlling food intake	38
3.4	Pre-gastric factors	38
3.5	Gastrointestinal and post-absorptive factors	39
3.6	Enteric nervous system	39
3.7	The central nervous system	40
3.8	Long-term control	41
3.9	CNS factors	41
3.10	Lifestyle changes	42
3.11	The basics of dieting	44
3.12	Medical and surgical treatment	45
4	Digestion and absorption	47
4.1	The gastrointestinal tract	47
4.2	Gastric acid production	48
4.3	Proton pump inhibitors	50
4.4	Helicobacter pylori	51
4.5	The small intestine	52
4.6	The gastrointestinal barrier	52
4.7	Paneth cells	53
4.8	The enteric endocrine system	54
4.9	The pancreas	55
4.10	Absorption in the small intestine: general principles	55
4.11	Crossing the gastrointestinal barrier	57
4.12	Absorption and secretion of water and electrolytes	58
4.13	Pathophysiology of diarrhoea	59
4.14	Rehydration therapy	60
4.15	Absorption of sugars and amino acids	60
4.16	Absorption of amino acids and peptides	62
4.17	Absorption of lipids	63
4.18	Absorption of minerals and metals	63
4.19	Malabsorption syndromes	65

4.20	Steatorrhoea	70
4.21	Lactose intolerance	70
4.22	Glucose–galactose malabsorption	70
4.23	Coeliac disease	71
4.24	Crohn's disease	71
4.25	The large intestine	71
5	Synthesis, mobilisation and transport of lipids and lipoproteins	75
5.1	Fatty acid synthesis	75
5.2	Long-term control of fatty acid synthase	77
5.3	Triacylglycerols	77
5.4	Mobilisation of lipid stores	78
5.5	Transport of lipids	78
5.6	Intestinal uptake of lipids	78
5.7	Chylomicrons	79
5.8	Apolipoproteins	79
5.9	Export of fat from the liver	82
5.10	Role of HDL in lipid metabolism	82
5.11	Apoprotein classes	84
5.12	LDL receptors	84
5.13	Disorders of lipoprotein metabolism	85
5.14	Alzheimer's disease	85
5.15	Pharmacologic intervention	85
6	The liver	91
6.1	General overview	91
6.2	Storage diseases	91
6.3	Glycogen storage diseases	92
6.4	General liver metabolism	92
6.5	Production and excretion of bile	93
6.6	Pattern and control of bile secretion	96
6.7	Clinical significance of bile secretion	97
6.8	Cholesterol metabolism	97
6.9	Regulating cholesterol synthesis	97
6.10	Regulating sterol synthesis	98
6.11	Drug metabolism	99
6.12	Breakdown of haem (Haemoglobin)	102
6.13	Bilirubin	102
6.14	Jaundice	104
6.15	Protein metabolism – albumin	104
6.16	Protein metabolism – nitrogen metabolism and the urea cycle	105

6.17	The urea cycle	109
6.18	Regulation of the urea cycle	109
6.19	Urea cycle defects	111
6.20	Neurotoxicity associated with ammonia	111
7	Alcohol metabolism and cirrhosis	113
7.1	The alcohol dehydrogenase system	113
7.2	The microsomal cytochrome P450 system	115
7.3	The peroxisome catalase system	115
7.4	The consequence of alcohol intake	115
7.5	Short-term metabolic consequences of alcohol intake	116
7.6	Long-term consequences of chronic alcohol intake	116
7.7	Cirrhosis of the liver	118
7.8	Complications of cirrhosis	118
8	Protein structures	121
8.1	Protein primary structure	121
8.2	Peptide bonds	121
8.3	Protein interactions	121
8.4	Levels of protein structure	123
8.5	Types of protein structure	123
8.6	The α -helix	124
8.7	The β -sheet	124
8.8	Protein folding	124
8.9	Carbohydrates and lipid association with protein	125
8.10	Disruption of the native state	126
8.11	Incorrect protein folding and neurodegenerative disease	126
8.12	The study of proteins	126
8.13	Defects in protein structure and function	127
8.14	Glycolipid degradation	128
8.15	Protein receptor defects	129
8.16	Transformation and carcinogenesis	129
9	Enzymes and diagnosis	131
9.1	Enzyme nomenclature	131
9.2	Catalytic mechanism	132
9.3	Lowering the activation energy	132
9.4	Reactions, rates and equilibria	133
9.5	Michaelis–menten kinetics	134
9.6	Lineweaver–burk	134
9.7	Isoenzymes	135
9.8	Enzyme inhibitors	136

9.9	The control of enzyme activity	137
9.10	Allosteric enzymes	138
9.11	Covalent modification of enzymes	138
9.12	Control proteins	139
9.13	Enzymes in medicine	140
9.14	Biomarkers and enzymes in diagnosis	142
9.15	Enzymes in the diagnosis of pathology	143
9.16	Liver-function tests	144
10	The kidney	147
10.1	Nephron structure	147
10.2	Kidney function	147
10.3	Diuretics	150
10.4	Anti-diuretic hormone	151
10.5	Aquaporins	151
11	Haemostasis	153
11.1	Blood vessel trauma	153
11.2	Blood coagulation	154
11.3	The coagulation cascade	154
11.4	The tissue factor (TF) pathway	154
11.5	The contact activation pathway	155
11.6	The common pathway	156
11.7	Amplification of the clotting process	156
11.8	Co-factors in coagulation	156
11.9	Regulators of coagulation	157
11.10	Breaking down the clot	158
11.11	Disorders of haemostasis	159
	11.11.1 Platelet disorders	159
	11.11.2 Disorders of coagulation	159
11.12	Pharmacology of haemostasis	160
12	Bone metabolism and calcium homeostasis	167
12.1	Mineral density test	167
12.2	Osteoblasts	167
12.3	Osteoclasts	168
12.4	Bone structure	168
12.5	Composition of bone	169
12.6	Collagen	169
12.7	Bone disorders	170
12.8	Contributing factors to bone disorders	171
12.9	Treatments of bone disorders	172

12.10	Calcium homeostasis	172
12.11	Endocrine regulation of $[Ca^{2+}]_{ECF}$	172
12.12	Parathyroid hormone	173
12.13	Vitamin D	174
13	Intracellular signalling	175
13.1	Hormones	175
13.2	The hierarchical nature of hormonal control	176
13.3	Hormone synthesis and secretion	178
13.4	Hormonal control	179
13.5	Types of chemical messenger	181
13.6	Intracellular signalling and signal transduction	182
13.7	Cell-surface and intracellular receptors	182
	13.7.1 Cell-surface receptors	182
	13.7.2 Intracellular receptors	185
13.8	Second messengers	187
13.9	The glucagon receptor	190
13.10	The gastrin receptor	190
14	Inflammation	193
14.1	The acute inflammatory response	193
14.2	Leukocyte transmigration	194
14.3	Chronic inflammation	196
14.4	Mediators of inflammation	197
14.5	Acute-phase proteins	197
14.6	Patterns of acute and chronic inflammation	199
14.7	Inflammatory disorders	199
15	The immune response	209
15.1	Leukocytes	209
15.2	Innate immunity	209
	15.2.1 The complement system	210
	15.2.2 Complement deficiency	211
	15.2.3 Natural killer cells	213
15.3	Passive immunity	213
15.4	Acquired immunity	213
	15.4.1 The humoral immune response	213
	15.4.2 The clonality of B-cells	214
	15.4.3 Antibodies	214
	15.4.4 The Cell-mediated immune response	216
	15.4.5 Antigen-presenting cells	219

15.4.6	Interaction of APCs with T-cells	219
15.4.7	Major histocompatibility complex (MHC)	219
15.4.8	Autoimmunity	221
15.4.9	Tolerance	222
15.4.10	Overcoming tolerance	223
15.4.11	Treating autoimmune disease	224
16	Mitochondrial dysfunction	231
16.1	Mitochondrial DNA	231
16.2	Non-Mendelian inheritance	231
16.3	Mitochondrial cytopathies	232
16.4	Common symptoms of mitochondrial dysfunction	234
16.5	Mitochondria and ageing	234
16.6	Diagnosis of mitochondrial myopathies	235
17	Nerve and muscle systems	237
17.1	Nerves	237
17.2	The nerve message	237
17.3	Diseases of the nervous system	240
17.4	Specific neural disorders	241
17.5	Muscle types	246
17.6	The neuromuscular junction	247
17.7	Neuromuscular disease	248
17.8	Sarcomeres and focal adhesions	249
17.9	Dystrophin	250
17.10	Intrinsic cardiomyopathy	251
17.11	Metabolic diseases of muscle	252
18	The cytoskeleton	255
18.1	Actin filaments/microfilaments	255
18.2	Intermediate filaments	255
18.3	Microtubules	256
18.4	Spectrin	256
18.5	Alzheimer's disease	257
18.6	Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis	258
18.7	Synapsins	258
19	Genes and medicine	259
19.1	Chromosomes	259
19.2	Chromosome banding	259

19.3	Karyotypes	260
19.4	The spectral karyotype: fluorescence <i>in situ</i> hybridisation (FISH)	260
19.5	Gene mutations	262
19.6	Genetic disorders	262
19.7	Gene testing	263
19.7.1	Advantages and disadvantages of gene testing	264
19.8	The human genome project	264
19.8.1	How do we compare to other organisms?	265
19.9	Gene therapy	265
19.9.1	Current status	266
19.9.2	Some ethical questions	267
19.10	The next step: functional genomics	267
19.11	Pharmacogenomics	268
19.12	Genetic engineering: recombinant DNA technology	270
19.12.1	The tools and terminology of the genetic engineer	270
19.12.2	Transferring genes	271
19.12.3	Genetic markers	272
19.13	The polymerase chain reaction (PCR)	272
19.14	Complementary DNA (cDNA)	273
19.15	DNA probes	273
19.16	DNA sequencing	274
19.17	Genetic engineering applications	276
19.18	Commercial gene products	276
19.19	Gene therapy	278
19.20	Controlling gene expression	278
19.21	Transcription factors	280
19.22	Response element	281
19.23	Genes and cancer: the cell cycle	281
19.23.1	Checkpoints and cell-cycle regulation	282
19.23.2	Initiation of cell division and differentiation	283
19.23.3	Genes controlling the cell cycle	283
19.24	Viruses and cancer	284
19.25	Apoptosis	285
19.26	Caspases	285
20	Antibacterial drug resistance	291
20.1	Horizontal gene transfer	291
20.2	Penicillin resistance	292

20.3	Sulphonamide resistance	294
20.4	Bacterial efflux pumps	296
20.5	<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	297
20.6	Vancomycin	297
20.7	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	298
20.8	<i>Clostridium difficile</i>	298
Index		299

CHAPTER 1

Nutritional requirements

Food consists of water, macronutrients (carbohydrates, fats and proteins) and micronutrients (vitamins, minerals).

The amount of energy contained in food is typically measured in calories; a dietary calorie (C) is actually a thousand calories (kcal) (*a calorie is defined as the amount of heat energy that is required to increase the temperature of 1 gram of water by 1 degree Celsius*). Carbohydrates (a hydrated energy source) and proteins produce about 4 kcal per gram, while fat (an anhydrous energy source) produces about 9 kcal of heat per gram.

1.1 Carbohydrates and sugars

Carbohydrates are mostly used for energy; limited amounts can be stored in the liver and muscles in the form of glycogen. They vary widely in their complexity, and in the speed with which they are digested and metabolised. Sugars are a class of carbohydrates. Sugar monosaccharides include glucose, fructose and galactose. Disaccharides, composed of two monosaccharide units, include sucrose (common table sugar, glucose and fructose), lactose (found mostly in milk), glucose and galactose (Figure 1.1).

Polysaccharides are polymers of monosaccharides. Starch is a polysaccharide composed of amylose, an essentially linear polysaccharide, and amylopectin, a highly branched polysaccharide; both are polymers of D-Glucose.

Amylose (Figure 1.2) consists typically of 200–20 000 glucose units, which form a helix as a result of the bond angles between the units; the linkages between glucose molecules are referred to as 1–4 (between carbon 1 and carbon 4 of adjacent glucose molecules; see Figure 1.1 for numbering of ring structure).

Amylopectin differs from amylose in being highly branched. Short side chains of about 30 glucose units are attached with 1–6 linkages approximately every 20–30 glucose units along the chain.

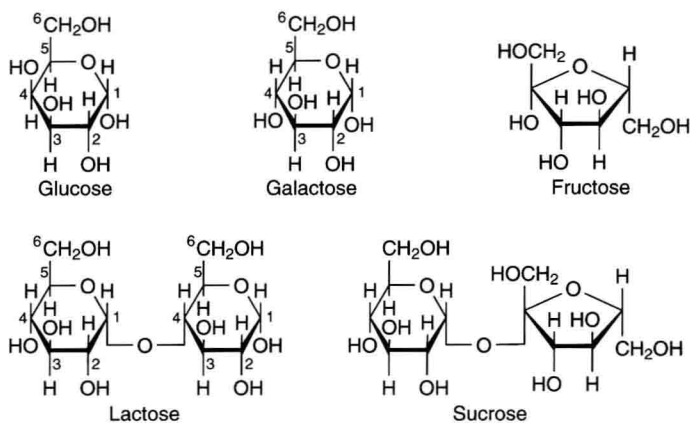


Figure 1.1 Simple sugar structures.

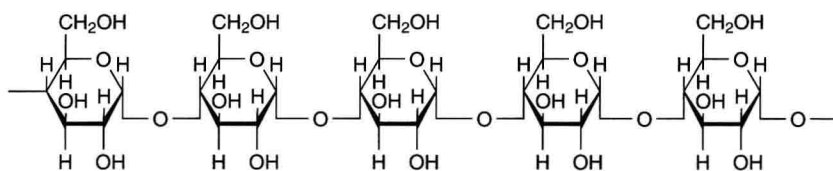


Figure 1.2 Amylose.

1.2 Glycogen

Glycogen is similar in structure to amylopectin, but branches more frequently (Figure 1.3). Starch and glycogen polysaccharides provide structures that are used for energy storage, in plants and animals respectively.

Fibre is a polymer carbohydrate. Most fibre is derived from the cell walls of plants and is indigestible, for example cellulose.

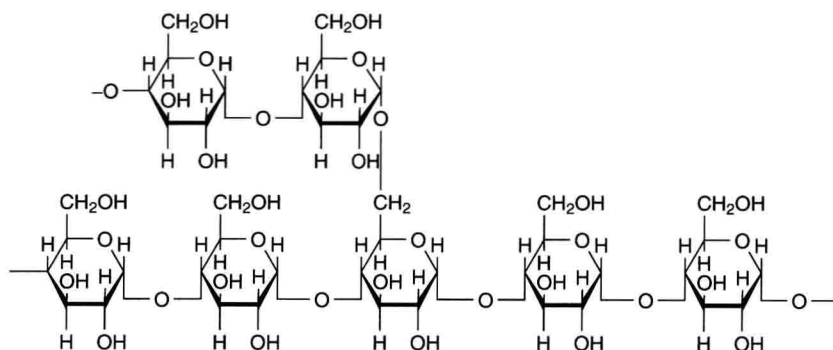


Figure 1.3 Glycogen.

Table 1.1 Glycaemic indices of some common foods.

Classification	GI range	Common examples
Low GI	55 or less	Most fruit and vegetables (except potatoes, watermelon), grainy breads, pasta, legumes/pulses, milk, products that are low in carbohydrates (e.g. fish, eggs, meat, nuts, oils), apples.
Medium GI	56–69	Whole wheat products, brown rice, basmati rice, sweet potato, table sugar, ice cream.
High GI	70–99	Corn flakes, baked potato, watermelon, boiled white rice, croissant, white bread.
	100	Pure glucose.

1.3 Glycaemic index

The ability of the body to digest different carbohydrates can be described by the glycaemic index (GI) (Table 1.1).

Low GI foods release glucose more slowly and steadily; high GI foods cause a more rapid rise in blood glucose levels. The latter are suitable for energy recovery after endurance exercise or for a person with diabetes experiencing hypoglycaemia. Only foods containing carbohydrates have a glycaemic index. Fats and proteins have little or no direct effect on blood sugar.

1.4 Lipids

Lipids (fats) provide energy and constitute a major energy store, as well as being an important body mass builder. Up to 20% of a healthy male's total weight comprises fat; this can be as much as 25% in females. Fat is a normal and healthy constituent of the body, cushioning internal organs from shock and providing heat insulation. As an energy source, fat contains over twice the energy per gram as does carbohydrate. Carbohydrates (in the form of glucose) are typically used to provide rapid energy, while fat is burned during sustained exercise. Fat is the primary fuel of choice during slow aerobic exercise, while glucose is used during fast aerobic or anaerobic exercise.

Lipids include fats and oils; oils tend to be liquid at room temperature, fats tend to be solid.

A fat molecule consists of one molecule of glycerol, bonded by dehydration synthesis (the loss of water) to three fatty acid molecules (this is a triacylglycerol, Figure 1.4). Fatty acids are

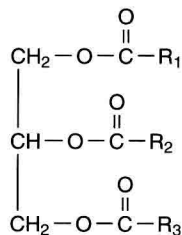


Figure 1.4 A triacylglycerol molecule. The glycerol backbone is bonded to three fatty acids (R_1 , R_2 and R_3).