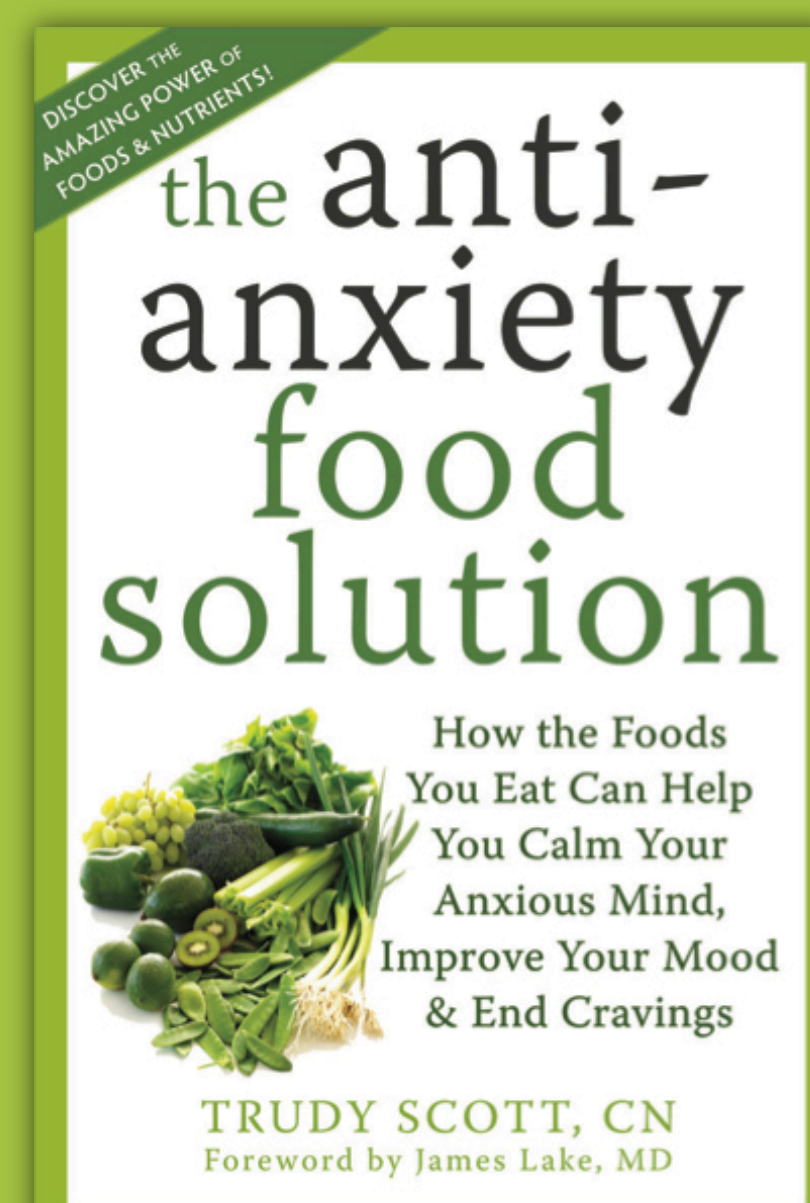


GABA: an amino acid supplement for neurotransmitter support and anxiety relief

Trudy Scott, Certified Nutritionist

Author, *The Antianxiety Food Solution*



GABA overview

GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid) is a calming neurotransmitter. Low levels of GABA are associated with anxiety, agitation, stress, panic attacks and poor sleep, with sufficient GABA levels providing feelings of calm and relaxation (1).

GABA is also an amino acid and is available in supplement form. Earlier GABA research suggests that taken orally, it cannot cross the blood-brain barrier and enter the brain in amounts substantial enough to have a calming effect.

However, there is now much clinical evidence indicating that supplemental GABA (especially in an sublingual form), can ease anxiety symptoms (2, 3). There is also more recent evidence to support the effectiveness of oral GABA as a supplement for neurotransmitter support and anxiety relief.

GABA mechanisms and the blood brain barrier

The blood brain barrier is more dynamic than assumed in the past:

“... and some passage of solutes can occur by transcytosis, carrier-mediated transport, or simple diffusion of hydrophobic substances” (4)

Neurotransmitters as food supplements - the effects of GABA on brain and behavior:

“We suggest that any veridical effects of GABA food supplements on brain and cognition might be exerted through blood brain barrier passage or, more indirectly, via an effect on the enteric nervous system.” (5)

Client feedback on GABA's calming effects

“I have taken Xanax in the past for panic attacks. My functional medicine doctor suggested [GABA]. I was amazed how it works just like Xanax – instant calm feeling within 10 mins of taking 2 capsules. I use them as needed when I am having heightened stress and anxiety.”

“[GABA] helps lower my overall anxious feeling all day (anxiety for no reason).”

“I usually take [GABA] at night when I know I need it, to quiet my mind and relax my body so I can sleep better.”

“I did something I thought I would never be able to do - I drove further than I have in over 5 years (not solo yet), which gives me a lot of hope of regaining my independence. I've had no panic attacks and so many improvements since I started taking the amino acids. I take the GABA before I'm in any of the situations (like driving) that might trigger anxiety and its working! I couldn't be happier!”

“[GABA] changed my life in minutes! I take it every day now. No more hopelessness!” (6)

References

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Effective forms of GABA

The author has found the following to be effective:

- 125mg of GABA combined with 25 mg tyrosine, 50mg glycine, 20 mg taurine, as a sublingual lozenge – this is the most effective form the author uses with clients
- 300mg GABA, 150mg l-theanine – a capsule opened and used sublingually is more effective than swallowed
- 200mg PharmaGABA chewable - this form is preferred by some individuals

Dosages of the above are determined via a trial with the client and individualized to their unique needs and biochemistry.

If GABA is low, the client knows within 5 -10 minutes if the GABA supplement is helping to reduce anxiety symptoms, provided the trial is done with a sublingual form.

GABA is frequently used with other nutrient support and always in addition to dietary changes.

Phenibut is not used by the author due to concerns about dependence, tolerance and withdrawal. (7)

Conclusion

The ISNPR (International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research) consensus position statement on nutritional medicine in modern psychiatry, supports dietary modification and recognizes the need for nutrient-based support that may include amino acids. (8)

GABA is clinically effective for anxiety, and new theories have been suggested with regards to the mechanism of action. However we still have much to learn about the behavioral effects of supplemental GABA for neurotransmitter support and anxiety relief. (5)



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