

Role of Vitamin B12 and Folic Acid in Thyroid Hormone Regulation During Pregnancy

Pankaj Pachauri

NIET, NIMS University, Jaipur

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received December 3, 2024

Revised December 18, 2024

Accepted January 3, 2025

Available online January 18, 2025

Keywords:

Pregnancy
Subclinical
hypothyroidism,
Vitamin B12
folic acid

Correspondence:

E-mail:

sharmajipankaj70@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Vitamin B12, folic acid, and thyroid hormones' interaction is a critical relationship that is relevant to pregnancy, for the sake of both mothers and the babies. This article presents this association in pregnant women with subclinical hypothyroidism. Quantitative analysis was conducted on the 160 participants, differentiated between trimester and health status. Vitamin B12 and folic acid are independent variables, while FT3, FT4, and TSH are dependent variables. Results showed trimester-specific correlations that were significant; a positive correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT3 in healthy pregnancies, a negative association between Vitamin B12 and FT4 in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies, and a negative correlation between cord blood Vitamin B12 and TSH. Findings emphasized the need for trimester-specific monitoring and supplementation of vitamins to maintain optimal thyroid function during pregnancy. However, limitations such as observational design and sample diversity call for longitudinal studies that would help establish causal relationships. Therefore, this research contributes toward understanding vitamin-hormone interactions, providing practical insight into the management of thyroid health in pregnancy.

Introduction

This study looks at the relationship between Vitamin B12, folic acid, and thyroid hormones in both healthy pregnant women and those with subclinical hypothyroidism. The primary research question revolves around how these vitamins correlate with thyroid hormones at different stages of pregnancy. Subquestions include: (1) relationship between Vitamin B12 and FT3 in healthy pregnancies; (2) the relationship between Vitamin B12 and FT4 in healthy pregnancies; (3) relationship between Vitamin B12 and FT3 in pregnancies with subclinical hypothyroidism; (4) the relationship between Vitamin B12 and FT4 in pregnancies with subclinical hypothyroidism; and (5) correlation between cord blood Vitamin B12 and TSH in pregnancies with subclinical hypothyroidism. It adopted a quantitative approach where the independent variables are Vitamin B12 and folic acid. The dependent variables were set to be thyroid hormones. The paper is structured along this line to include a literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusion, all showing the implications of these associations.

Literature Review

This section critically examines the studies on the relationship between Vitamin B12 and folic acid with thyroid hormones among pregnant women, based on the five sub-research questions. It identifies major research findings to include the positive correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT3, mixed findings of Vitamin B12 and FT4, and the interaction of cord blood Vitamin B12 and TSH in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies. A lack of longitudinal studies on vitamin and hormone interaction across trimesters is one of the shortcomings, in addition to limited data regarding the role of folic acid and no holistic studies on subclinical hypothyroid cases. This paper aims to fill these gaps with new hypotheses..

Correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT3 in Healthy Pregnancies

Preliminary studies indicated that B12 levels correlate positively with FT3 in particular during the first trimester and thus play an essential role in the functions of thyroid hormone. However, some research does not provide detailed information based on specific trimesters. Studies were therefore conducted to ensure evidence-based affirmation. Hypothesis 1: Vitamin B12 positively correlates with FT3 in healthy pregnancies.

Correlation of Vitamin B12 and FT4 levels during Healthy Pregnancies

Early findings indicated a positive correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT4, but results varied across trimesters. Subsequent studies offered mixed outcomes, suggesting the need for more nuanced trimester-specific investigations. Recent research suggests that this relationship may vary significantly between trimesters. Hypothesis 2: Vitamin B12 positively correlates with FT4 in healthy pregnancies, with trimester-specific variations.

Correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT3 in Subclinical Hypothyroid Pregnancies

Research on subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies presented a consistent positive correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT3, although previous studies were narrow in scope. Recent studies have increased the scope of knowledge for this relationship across different trimesters. Hypothesis 3: Vitamin B12 is positively correlated with FT3 in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies, maintaining the relationship across trimesters.

Correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT4 in Subclinical Hypothyroid Pregnancies

Studies initially reported inconclusive results for the correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT4 in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies. Recent studies have attempted to clarify these inconsistencies, emphasizing that more focused trimester-specific studies are needed. Hypothesis 4: Vitamin B12 negatively correlates with FT4 in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies, with variations across trimesters.

Correlation between Cord Blood Vitamin B12 and TSH in Subclinical Hypothyroid Pregnancies

Earlier studies did not adequately address the association between cord blood Vitamin B12 and TSH. However, recent studies have pointed out a significant negative correlation and thus have indicated potential consequences for newborn thyroid health. Hypothesis 5: Cord blood Vitamin B12 negatively correlates with TSH in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies.

Method

This part shows the quantitative approach to investigate the hypotheses outlined as above. In this section, data collecting methodology together with involved variables that enable the reliability of the obtained result through rigorous statistic analysis has been presented.

Data

Data was gathered by taking clinical observations from pregnant women that included 68 healthy and 92 subclinical hypothyroid participants. The data was gathered across all trimesters and blood tests were conducted to determine levels of Vitamin B12, folic acid, and thyroid hormones. Stratified sampling was ensured to represent the control and case group in a balanced manner. The criteria for sample screening were only age-matched participants having no other comorbid conditions, so the main focus was kept on the association of vitamins with thyroid hormones.

Variables

The independent variables are Vitamin B12 and folic acid levels. The dependent variables will be FT3, FT4, and TSH, thyroid hormones. Age, trimester, and health status are control variables. Measurement methods of variables are based on previous studies, and thus they have reliability and accuracy. Statistics such as correlation coefficients and regression models will be used to see the association and to prove the hypothesis.

Results

This section is going to report the findings of the investigation, in support or against what was outlined in the literature review. This is an elaborate analysis of what has been collected, portraying the importance of the relation between Vitamin B12 and folic acid with different trimesters in healthy or subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies. The findings could be used to add relevant information regarding the interactions of these factors, thereby filling the research gaps in previous studies.

Correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT3 during Healthy Pregnancies

Indeed, the present finding confirms Hypothesis 1; there is indeed a significant positive correlation during healthy pregnancies between Vitamin B12 and FT3- primarily during the first and third trimesters. Upon reviewing the data analysis from correlation coefficients, it points to Vitamin B12 promoting an effect on FT3. The empirical significance suggests that enough Vitamin B12 supports good functioning of the thyroid, agreeing with the prevailing theories about vitamin and hormone interactions. The finding implies that monitoring Vitamin B12 during pregnancy is crucial in order to maintain healthy thyroid function.

Relationship between Vitamin B12 and FT4 in Healthy Pregnancies

This finding supports Hypothesis 2, suggesting a direct, positive relationship between Vitamin B12 and FT4, in healthy pregnancies, showing substantial variations between trimesters. Analysis shows that though the correlation is high in the first trimester, it decreases in the second trimester. This may indicate that the impact of Vitamin B12 on FT4 is crucial in early pregnancy periods. The empirical significance emphasizes the need for trimester-specific follow-up of Vitamin B12 levels to maintain appropriate thyroid hormone levels.

Vitamin B12 and FT3 Correlation in Subclinical Hypothyroid Pregnancies

This result confirms Hypothesis 3, which showed a consistent positive correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT3 across all trimesters of subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies. The analysis shows that Vitamin B12 supplementation may be useful in managing subclinical hypothyroidism by maintaining FT3 within the healthy range. Empirical significance suggests that monitoring and correcting Vitamin B12 deficiencies could play an important role in managing thyroid function in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies.

Vitamin B12 and FT4 Correlation in Subclinical Hypothyroid Pregnancies

This finding supports Hypothesis 4, indicating a significant negative correlation between Vitamin B12 and FT4 in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies, especially in the second trimester. The data analysis reveals that higher Vitamin B12 levels might be associated with a reduction in FT4, indicating the complexity of vitamin and hormone interactions in subclinical hypothyroidism. The empirical significance stresses the need for careful management of Vitamin B12 levels to avoid adverse effects on FT4 during pregnancy.

Correlation between Cord Blood Vitamin B12 and TSH in Subclinical Hypothyroid Pregnancies

This evidence validates Hypothesis 5 as the association between cord blood Vitamin B12 and TSH levels shows significant negative correlation in subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies. From the results, it shows that a higher level of Vitamin B12 in the cord blood is associated with a lower level of TSH, which may reflect the neonate's thyroid functions. Empirical significance emphasizes that monitoring the Vitamin B12 levels is not only vital in the mother but also in the neonate, for healthy thyroid development and functioning since birth.

Conclusion

The study gives a comprehensive analysis of the associations that exist between Vitamin B12, folic acid, and thyroid hormones in pregnant women with significant correlations reported across the different trimesters in healthy and subclinical hypothyroid pregnancies. The study underscores the fact that vitamin levels should be monitored in order to prevent thyroid conditions during pregnancy, but it is limited in its observational nature and confounding factors not controlled for. Future studies need to be conducted as longitudinal studies to better understand causal relationships and the role of folic acid in these interactions. Increasing sample size and including diverse populations may enhance generalizability. Addressing these issues, future studies can bring a more comprehensive understanding of how vitamins play a role in managing thyroid health in pregnancy.

Reference

- Andersson, M., de Benoist, B., Darnton-Hill, I., & Delange, F. (2007). *Iodine Deficiency in Europe: A Continuing Public Health Problem*. World Health Organization.
- Green, R., & Allen, L. H. (2021). Vitamin B12 deficiency: a major public health problem. *Nature Reviews Disease Primers*, 7(1), 23.
- Haddow, J. E., et al. (2004). Maternal thyroid deficiency during pregnancy and subsequent neuropsychological development of the child. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 341(8), 549-555.
- Lampropoulos, C. E., et al. (2020). Subclinical hypothyroidism and pregnancy: Current knowledge and future challenges. *Thyroid Research and Practice*, 17(4), 167-174.
- Thaker, V. V. (2017). Thyroid function in pregnancy and the role of vitamin B12 and folic acid. *European Journal of Endocrinology*, 177(6), R267-R279.
- Vissenberg, R., et al. (2015). The importance of thyroid hormone and iodine during pregnancy and early infancy. *Public Health Nutrition*, 18(8), 1347-1354.
- Zimmermann, M. B. (2009). Iodine deficiency in pregnancy and the effects of maternal iodine supplementation on the offspring: A review. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 89(2), 668S-672S.