Activation by Phosphate of Yeast Phosphofructokinase*

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The activity of yeast phosphofructokinase assayed in vitro at physiological concentrations of known substrates and effectors is 100-fold lower than the glycolytic flux observed in vivo. Phosphate synergistically with AMP activates the enzyme to a level within the range of the physiological needs. The activation by phosphate is pH-dependent: the activity is 100-fold at pH 6.4 while no effect is observed at pH 7.5. The activation by AMP, phosphate, or both together is primarily due to changes in the affinity of the enzyme for fructose-6-P. Under conditions similar to those prevailing in the glycolysing yeast (pH 6.4, 1 mM ATP, 10 mM NH₄⁺) the apparent affinity constant for fructose-6-P (S₀₅₀) decreases from 3 to 1.4 mM upon addition of 1 mM AMP or 10 mM phosphate; if both activators are present together, S₀₅₀ is further decreased to 0.2 mM. In all cases the cooperativity toward fructose-6-P remains unchanged. These results are consistent with a model for phosphofructokinase where two conformations, with different affinities for fructose-6-P and ATP, will present the same affinity for AMP and phosphate. AMP would diminish the affinity for ATP at the regulatory site and phosphate would increase the affinity for fructose-6-P. The results obtained indicate that the activity of phosphofructokinase in the shift glycogenesis-gluconeogenesis is mainly regulated by changes in the concentration of fructose-6-P.

The central role of phosphofructokinase in the carbohydrate metabolism of different organisms including yeast is clearly established (for a review see Refs. 1 and 2). However in studies with the enzyme from yeast it seems to have been overlooked that when phosphofructokinase is assayed at the concentrations of substrates and known effectors (fructose-6-P, AMP, ATP, and citrate (1)) thought to prevail in the cell (3), the activity found fails to account for the rate of glucose utilization by the yeast. The measured activity reaches about 0.2 μmol/min/g of yeast while the glucose consumption attains about 20 μmol/min/g of yeast.¹ Since most of the glucose consumed is channeled through glycolysis (4), the measured activity is much lower than expected. A possible explanation would be that the local concentrations of metabolites around phosphofructokinase are different from those measured in the whole cell. Since phosphofructokinase is a cytoplasmic enzyme such differences do not appear very likely except perhaps for ATP that could be concentrated in the mitochondria. With this reserve the following hypotheses appear as most plausible to explain the observed differences. (a) The enzyme presents a behavior in vitro that is different of that prevailing in vivo (5-7); (b) an unknown activator is not present in the assay, (c) a pathway exists that goes from glucose-6-P to triose phosphate without the involvement of phosphofructokinase. This last hypothesis has not been considered in the present work.

The first hypothesis was tested measuring the activity of the enzyme in situ as described by Serrano et al. (8), the second by looking for compounds which could activate the enzyme. Phosphate appeared as a good candidate since it activates animal phosphofructokinases (5, 9) and is a requirement for the enzyme in situ as described by Serrano et al. (8). Cell-free extracts were obtained grinding the yeasts with 3 times their weight of alumina and extracting them with 5 volumes of 40 mM 2-(N-morpholino)ethanesulfonic acid.
Partial Purification of Phosphofructokinase—Phosphofructokinase was purified to free it from adenylate kinase and ATPases present in the crude extract. The purification involved protamine sulfate treatment, ammonium sulfate fractionation between 35 and 55% saturation, passage through a Sephadex G-200 column and concentration on an Amicon XM-100 membrane. The purification was 10-fold with 45% recovery. The unwanted contaminant activities of the purified enzyme were less than 0.05%.

Assay of Phosphofructokinase—The standard assay was adapted from that described by Raeder (12) with aldolase, triose phosphate isomerase, and glycerophosphate dehydrogenase. The composition of the assay mixture was as follows: 40 mM 2-(N-morpholino)ethanesulfonic acid (Moes), 0.1 M KCl, 5 mM MgCl₂, 2.5 mM 2-mercaptoethanol, 0.2 mM NADH, 1 mM ATP, 10 mM NH₄Cl, and 0.5 unit of each of the auxiliary enzymes. The pH of the mixture was 6.4. An substrate mixture of glucose-6-P and fructose-6-P in the proportion 3:1 was used at an end concentration of 0.3 mM fructose-6-P unless otherwise stated. The auxiliary enzymes were dialyzed to free them from ammonium sulfate.

Other Methods—Metabolites were determined by a rapid sampling method as described by Saez and Lagunas (13).

Protein was assayed according to the method of Lowry et al. (14) after precipitation with 5% trichloroacetic acid. Bovine serum albumin was used as standard.

In the case of the in situ assays it was assumed that 1 g of toluenized yeast affords 50 mg of extractable protein (8).

Biochemicals were from Sigma or Boehringer. Other reagents were of analytical reagent grade.

RESULTS

Effect of Phosphate on Activity of Phosphofructokinase—To assay phosphofructokinase under physiological conditions the concentration of several metabolites in yeast was measured. The results of these determinations are presented in Table I. An internal pH of 6.4 for the yeast was accepted (15).

When phosphofructokinase was assayed at pH 6.4 at concentrations of substrates and effectors similar to that found in the cell growing on glucose (0.3 mM fructose-6-P, 1 mM ATP, 0.3 mM ADP, 0.1 mM AMP, 10 mM NH₄Cl), the activity observed was only 0.2 unit/g of fresh yeast. The same low activity was obtained when the enzyme was assayed in situ, a procedure in which dilution of the protein is prevented (8). Citrate was not included in the assay mixture since preliminary experiments included in the assay mixture since preliminary experiments had shown that 0.5 mM citrate, the concentration present in glucose growing cells, had no effect on the activity of phosphofructokinase.

Addition of phosphate to the above assay mixture caused a great activation as it may be seen in Fig. 1. The activating effect was observed both in situ and in vitro. The action of phosphate was mimicked by arsenate but not by sulfate, pyro phosphate, or glycerophosphate. Activation by phosphate was also seen in phosphofructokinase from yeast grown on ethanol.

Fig. 2 shows the effect of phosphate on the activity of purified yeast phosphofructokinase at different values of pH. In the presence of phosphate the optimum pH of the enzyme is displaced toward a more acidic region. The effect of phosphate is strongly dependent on the pH of the assay: about 100-fold activation at pH 6.4 and slight inhibition at pH 7.5.

Characteristics of Activation by Phosphate—Omission of AMP and ADP from the reaction mixture resulted in a much lower degree of activation by phosphate. To determine whether the phosphate activation is dependent on the presence of AMP, or ADP, or both, a purified preparation of phosphofructokinase free of adenylate kinase and ATPase was used. AMP alone activated about 10 times, a maximum effect being reached at 2 mM; ADP alone had no effect. Phosphate alone activated only 2 fold as can be seen in the inset of Fig. 3. The same figure shows the effect of increasing amounts of phosphate added in the presence of AMP or ADP. Phosphate plus ADP can increase activity by a factor of 40 while phosphate plus AMP activate up to 300-fold. The activation observed in the presence of AMP and phosphate is greater than the product of the activation observed with AMP or phosphate alone.

Since the concentration of fructose-6-P in the experiments described above (0.3 mM) was not saturating, it appeared of interest to determine whether the activation was due to an increase in the maximal velocity of the enzyme or to an increased affinity for fructose-6-P. The results presented in Fig. 4 show that the Vₘₐₓ increases only about 2-fold when AMP, phosphate, or both are present. On the other hand the half-saturation value (Sₐₛ) is decreased by AMP or by phosphate, and the presence of both effectors together lowers the Sₐₛ value for fructose-6-P by an order of magnitude. This activity was assayed as described under "Experimental Procedures" in the presence of 0.1 mM AMP and 0.3 mM ADP. Phosphate was varied as indicated on the abscissa ○—○, cell-free extracts; △—△, toluenized cells (in situ assay).

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Table I

Concentrations of different metabolites in growing yeast

The yeast was grown as described under "Experimental Procedures" with glucose or ethanol as carbon source. While in the exponential phase of growth, the organisms were treated as described under Ref. 13 for extraction of metabolites. Metabolites were determined by conventional spectrophotometric methods. The values given are the mean of at least four determinations ± 1 S. E.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metabolite</th>
<th>Yeast growing on</th>
<th>nM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glucose-6-P</td>
<td>0.9 ± 0.2</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fructose-6-P</td>
<td>0.23 ± 0.08</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fructose-1,6-P</td>
<td>3 ± 1</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATP</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.1</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>0.41 ± 0.06</td>
<td>0.44 ± 0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>0.16 ± 0.01</td>
<td>0.16 ± 0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citrate</td>
<td>0.3 ± 0.3</td>
<td>2.0 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphate</td>
<td>9 ± 1</td>
<td>8.2 ± 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH₄⁺</td>
<td>10 ± 4</td>
<td>12 ± 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Effect of phosphate on the activity of yeast phosphofructokinase. Activity was assayed as described under "Experimental Procedures" in the presence of 0.1 mM AMP and 0.3 mM ADP. Phosphate was varied as indicated on the abscissa ○—○, cell-free extracts; △—△, toluenized cells (in situ assay).
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FIG. 2. Effect of pH on the activity of phosphofructokinase. A preparation purified as described under "Experimental Procedures" was used. The enzyme was assayed as described under "Experimental Procedures" with a 50 mM mixture of 3-(N-morpholino)propanesulfonic acid and 1,4-piperazinediethanesulfonic acid substituting the usual buffer; 0.1 mM AMP and 0.3 mM ADP were also added. - - - - , with 10 mM phosphate added; o--o, without phosphate added.

FIG. 3. Influence of added phosphate on the activity of yeast phosphofructokinase in the presence of AMP or ADP. A purified preparation was used. The enzyme was assayed as described under "Experimental Procedures" with the following additions: O--O, no additions; Δ-Δ, 0.1 mM AMP; x-x, 1 mM ADP; A-A, 1 mM AMP and 10 mM phosphate.

decrease occurs without marked changes in the sigmoidicity of the curve as evidenced by the Hill coefficient (n_H).

AMP has been reported to activate yeast phosphofructokinase by relieving ATP inhibition (16) and that seems also to be the case for phosphate in a number of animal tissues (17). The activation by AMP and phosphate of the yeast enzyme was studied at different concentrations of ATP. The results presented in Fig. 5 show that phosphate alone has no effect on ATP inhibition, and that 5 mM AMP only slightly relieves ATP inhibition but that no inhibition by ATP is observed in the presence of both AMP and phosphate. From examination of the curves it appears that phosphate added to AMP not only completely relieves ATP inhibition but produces an additional activation of about 5-fold.

If GTP is used instead of ATP, the inhibition by excess nucleotide is much less marked (18) and can be counteracted by AMP alone. In this case phosphate also increased activity about 6-fold when present in addition to AMP (data not shown).

DISCUSSION

At physiological concentrations of substrates and other known effectors, phosphate activates yeast phosphofructokinase about 100-fold. The phosphofructokinase activity measured in these conditions is sufficient to account for the rate of glucose utilization by intact yeast. That such an effect of phosphate has been overlooked may be due to the fact that activation is dependent on the presence of AMP and on the pH of the assay. The allosteric properties of yeast phosphofructokinase have been mostly studied at pH 7.5 or higher where ATP inhibition is most marked. This, and the absence of AMP in the assay mixture may explain the report that phosphate has no effect on yeast phosphofructokinase (16) or is inhibitory (19). Although it has been stated that ATP is only slightly inhibitory, or not at all, below pH 6.5 (19, 20) we consistently found a marked inhibition by ATP at this pH with our enzyme preparations even when using the assay conditions employed by these authors. It is possible that the discrepancies between different results are due to some modification of phosphofructokinase during the purification procedure.

Phosphate and AMP, alone or in combination do not greatly affect the Hill coefficient for fructose-6-P. Our results confirm and extend the observation that the Hill coefficient for the Saccharomyces cerevisiae enzyme is independent of the concentration of ATP and of the presence or absence of AMP (21). However, in the case of the phosphofructokinase from Saccharomyces carlsbergensis a strong influence of AMP and ADP on
same binding site on the enzyme. The situation differs from also discards the possibility that AMP and phosphate have the served when both compounds act together. This observation of the other since even at saturation neither phosphate nor affinity of the enzyme for one of the compounds in the presence

the sigmoidicity toward fructose-6-P is conserved in this model is consistent with the main reason is mainly by removing the inhibition by ATP. The behavior of the enzyme may be accounted for accepting the existence of an equilibrium between two conformational states with different affinity for fructose-6-P.

Phosphofructokinase from cells grown on ethanol is as sensitive to activation by phosphate as the enzyme from glucose- or gluconeogenic enzymes. The shift in fructose-1,6-P₂ concentrations is insufficient by far. In contrast, the drop in concentration of fructose-6-P in the shift from glycolysis to gluconeogenesis would decrease the activity of phosphofructokinase by a factor of 10. Therefore in this case it appears that the activity of phosphofructokinase in this shift. However in situations where changes in the concentrations of phosphate occur like in the shift aerobiosis-anaerobiosis (Pasteur effect) (29) this compound may play a direct role in the regulation of phosphofructokinase activity.

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