

# The Role Of Glucose Transporters In Skeletal Muscle, Liver, And Adipose Tissue In Metabolic Health And Disease

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## ABSTRACT

A family of facilitative glucose transporters (GLUTs) is involved in regulating tissue-specific glucose uptake and metabolism in the liver, skeletal muscle, and adipose tissue to ensure homeostatic control of blood glucose levels. Reduced glucose transport activity results in aberrant use of energy substrates and is associated with insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. It is well established that GLUT2, the main regulator of hepatic hexose flux, and GLUT4, the workhorse in insulin- and contraction-stimulated glucose uptake in skeletal muscle, are critical contributors in the control of whole-body glycemia. However, the molecular mechanism how insulin controls glucose transport across membranes and its relation to impaired glycemic control in type 2 diabetes remains not sufficiently understood. An array of circulating metabolites and hormone-like molecules and potential supplementary glucose transporters play roles in fine-tuning glucose flux between the different organs in response to an altered energy demand.

**Keywords:** Crosstalk .Exercise . Insulin resistance .NAFLD . Type 2 diabetes.

## INTRODUCTION

The primary energy source for the majority of bodily tissues is glucose. As a result, a sophisticated regulatory system comprising numerous tissues is responsible for maintaining whole-body glucose homeostasis. Distribution of dietary components according to the distinct needs of each organ is ensured by inter-organ crosstalk via a variety of circulating substances such as hormones and neuropeptides [84]. Glucose transporters (GLUTs) from the SLC2A gene family, sodium-glucose symporters (SGLTs), and SWEETs are the three kinds

of eukaryotic sugar transporters currently known [32]. Absorption, distribution, and excretion/recovery are just a few of the crucial processes that the wide family of GLUTs, evolutionary conserved facilitative glucose transporters, is engaged in when handling glucose and other hexoses. After the glucose is absorbed from the intestine, consumption of carbohydrates causes an instantaneous rise in blood glucose levels. Pancreatic beta cells directly react to the increased blood glucose levels by secreting more insulin as a result of a GLUT2-dependent mechanism. Due to the acute translocation of GLUT4 transporter vesicles to the plasma membrane and the suppression of hepatic gluconeogenesis, insulin binding to its receptors results in increased glucose transfer into skeletal muscle, adipose tissue, and the heart. Together, the two regulatory processes cause the bloodstream to be cleared of glucose. Insulin resistance is a condition in which peripheral tissues are comparatively unable to respond appropriately to rising insulin levels in the blood, leading to persistently high blood glucose levels. Type 2 diabetes mellitus, a significant health burden on contemporary society, is known to be characterised by a progressive rise in peripheral insulin resistance, followed by beta cell death and, as a result, hypoinsulinemia. This state of hyperglycemia is known to be a hallmark of type 2 diabetes mellitus. Although the pathogenesis of this metabolic condition is not fully understood, there is compelling evidence that various GLUT family members play a critical role in the onset and progression of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.

The function of the GLUT family in the liver, muscles, and adipose tissue is highlighted in this article, as well as how specifically GLUTs contribute to systemic glucose homeostasis and energy metabolism in both a healthy and diabetic condition. On the structure-function relationship of GLUTs [32, 93], insulin signalling [83], and the control of the insulin- and contraction-responsive GLUT4 trafficking, several recent studies offer excellent and complete overviews.

### **The liver**

**The liver is the main organ for glucose storage and essential for the regulation of glucose homeostasis.**

By making it easier for the activity of numerous glycogen production enzymes, such as phosphofructokinase and glycogen synthase, to be suppressed, glycogenolysis can be prevented [173]. Although the precise mechanisms underlying insulin's direct role in

regulating hepatic gluconeogenesis remain unknown, various indirect regulatory pathways have been shown to exist. There are numerous mechanisms and various different organs involved in the indirect control of insulin on HGP. Reduced levels of circulating free fatty acids and glycerol are the outcome of insulin-mediated suppression of lipolysis in adipose tissue. In addition, insulin prevents pancreatic alpha cells from producing glucagon. In the postprandial state, these procedures therefore result in decreased hepatic glucose output, sustaining normoglycemia [33].

### **Liver insulin resistance is a major feature of type 2 diabetes pathophysiology**

Reduced insulin-stimulated signal transduction pathways for hepatic glucose synthesis, including insulin receptors and downstream mediators, have been described as the hallmark of hepatic insulin resistance. It is known that a number of variables can lead to the development of insulin resistance in the liver. For instance, type 2 diabetes incidence and the advancement of hepatic insulin resistance are both substantially correlated with infections with the hepatitis C virus (HCV). According to the mechanism, the HCV core protein causes an increase in inflammatory indicators such tumour necrosis factor (TNF-), which finally results in less insulin signalling activation downstream [36]. Additionally, HCV core protein promotes lipid accumulation and hepatic steatosis by impairing mitochondrial activity and endoplasmic reticulum (ER) function in hepatocytes.

### **Several members of the GLUT family are relevant in liver metabolism**

In the liver, almost all GLUTs' gene expression has been verified. However, GLUT1, GLUT2, GLUT5, GLUT8, and GLUT9 are highly prevalent in this tissue.

- GLUT1: marker for oncogenic and metabolic diseases in the liver.
- GLUT2: major glucose transporter required for glucose sensing and hepatic glucose output.
- GLUT5: main mammalian fructose transporter.
- GLUT8: intracellular hexose transporter regulating hepatic oxidative metabolism.
- GLUT9: a high-capacity uric acid transporter compensating for GLUT2.
- GLUT10: high hepatic expression levels but so far enigmatic function.

Glucose transporters with minor expression levels or absent in the liver: GLUT3, GLUT4, GLUT6, GLUT7, GLUT11, GLUT12, and GLUT13 (HMIT)

## Skeletal muscle and adipose tissue

**Skeletal muscle is the main tissue controlling postprandial glucose disposal:** Skeletal muscle plays a critical role in maintaining blood glucose homeostasis. In actuality, after a meal, skeletal muscle serves as the primary glucose sink. Approximately 75% of the glucose that is removed from the body once it has been infused into it goes through the muscle, and this process is severely hampered in an insulin-resistant state [47, 48]. Exercise increases muscle insulin sensitivity, and insulin and exercise work together to improve skeletal muscle glucose clearance [46]. Blood glucose levels have been demonstrated to decrease with both aerobic and resistance exercise training, which is at least partially attributable to enhanced glucose transport activity and glucose metabolism in skeletal muscle. Although the mechanism underlying the health benefits of exercise is not fully known, it probably involves changes in the metabolic and signal transduction pathways in numerous organs.

**Adipose tissue regulates systemic glucose metabolism:** Adipose tissue is a highly dynamic organ with a high capacity for remodelling to meet the demands of changing nutritional conditions. Additionally, adipose tissue is a significant endocrine organ that produces vital hormones and elements that regulate the entire body's metabolism, systemic insulin sensitivity, and homeostasis of energy. Both the lack and excess of adipose tissue may lead to serious abnormalities of glucose homeostasis and diabetes. White adipose tissue harbours mature adipose cells and progenitor cells, but also other cell types related to its innervation and vascularization. The fact that it comprises a variety of immune cell types, which are essential for adipocyte function and can dynamically adapt to changes in fat depot size, is most crucial. Adipose cells from diverse origins, e.g., from subcutaneous or visceral depots, exhibit distinct metabolic characteristics and growth dynamics [82]. In rodents, but also in humans, the brown adipose tissue is specialised to disperse energy as heat. As a result of these structural intricacies, studies on glucose transport in adipose cells usually focus on a narrow subset of conditions relevant in adipocyte biology. The equilibrium of glucose and lipids is mostly regulated by adipose tissue, and the metabolism of both substances is interwoven. The contribution of adipose cells to glucose elimination is substantially smaller compared to skeletal muscle [47, 48]. However, research utilising transgenic and knockout mice with excess or defective glucose transporters have shown the crucial part adipose tissue plays in maintaining glucose homeostasis.

**Multiple GLUT isoforms are expressed in skeletal muscle and adipocytes:** Skeletal muscle has a profound capacity for taking up glucose from the extracellular medium. While samples from human and rodent skeletal muscle tissue have been found to express multiple glucose transporters belonging to both gene families, GLUTs and SGLTs, the corresponding copy numbers of the respective messenger RNAs (mRNAs) differed over 3 orders of magnitude.

- GLUT1: major glucose transporter regulating basal glucose transport into skeletal muscle and adipocytes.
- GLUT3: contributor to basal glucose uptake in skeletal muscle.
- GLUT4: the workhorse for insulin- and contraction-responsive glucose transports in skeletal muscle and adipocytes.
- GLUT8: intracellular transporter with links to developmental insulin signaling and autophagy.
- GLUT8: intracellular transporter with links to developmental insulin signaling and autophagy.
- GLUT10: enigmatic glucose transporter also expressed in skeletal muscle and adipose tissue.
- GLUT11: fructose transporter specific for muscular tissues.
- GLUT12: compensatory glucose transporter upon GLUT4 deficiency in skeletal muscle.
- Glucose transporters with minor abundance or absent in skeletal muscle and adipocytes: GLUT2, GLUT5, GLUT6, GLUT7, GLUT9, and GLUT13 (HMIT)

In skeletal muscle and adipose cells, RabGAPs relay insulin/contraction signaling to the GLUT4 translocation machinery.

### **TBC1D1 and TBC1D4 are associated with metabolic traits and diseases**

Mutations in TBC1D1 have been linked to features related to obesity in mice [29, 55, 88] and humans. Additionally, TBC1D4 mutations have been associated to human insulin resistance [40]. The Greenlandic Inuit group has a widespread loss-of-function mutation in TBC1D4 (p.Arg684Ter), and homozygous bearers of the mutant allele exhibit markedly delayed postprandial disposal of glucose and a more than 10-fold increased risk of developing type 2

diabetes. In actuality, TBC1D4 (p.Arg684Ter) seems to be the primary genetic contributor to type 2 diabetes in both Canadian and Greenlandic Inuit.

### **Physical exercise improves glycemic control through enhancing glucose transport**

Exercise training increased skeletal muscle GLUT4 protein levels, which in turn boosted whole-body insulin-mediated glucose clearance in obese type 2 diabetes patients. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that increased GLUT4 translocation to the cell surface, which is independent of insulin signalling, is what causes the increased muscle insulin sensitivity of glucose transport during exercise [87]. The primary function of GLUT4 in this tissue was demonstrated to significantly boost glucose transport in skeletal muscle of wild-type mice but not in GLUT4 mutant animals during exercise and contraction.

### **Role of glucose transporters in intra-organ crosstalk**

Homozygous global knockout mice with a lower abundance of GLUT4 in skeletal muscle and adipose tissue showed a more severe metabolic phenotype than heterozygous global knockout mice. This was linked to compensating mechanisms, which although still unclear, may enable survival. But conditional GLUT4 deletion in either adipose or skeletal muscle leads to systemic insulin resistance and has significant metabolic impacts on other tissues. While adipose-specific GLUT4 deletion causes insulin resistance in the liver and skeletal muscle, muscle-specific GLUT4 deficit reduced insulin sensitivity in adipose tissue and the liver [268]. It should be mentioned that compared to skeletal muscle, adipose cells contribute much less to the body's overall ability to dispose of glucose.

In muscle-specific GLUT4 mutant animals, overexpression of GLUT4 in adipose tissue (driven by the aP2 promoter) reversed whole-body insulin resistance without restoring glucose transport in skeletal muscle [25].

### **The etiology of insulin resistance is unknown**

Skeletal muscle and adipose tissue have reduced insulin-stimulated glucose uptake as a result of type 2 diabetes and insulin resistance. Since GLUT4 translocation is necessary for maintaining glycemic homeostasis, overexpression of GLUT4 but not GLUT1 in skeletal muscle normalises insulin sensitivity and glucose tolerance in mice. The molecular causes of the decreased insulin activity are not entirely understood, yet. It has been proposed that changes in lipid metabolism and the production of harmful metabolites, such as DAGs ,

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ceramides [31], and ROS, as well as inflammation, block the phosphorylation of the insulin receptor (IR), insulin receptor substrate 1 (IRS1), and downstream effectors, thereby inhibiting insulin signalling towards GLUT4. However, this idea has lately been called into question because experimental insulin resistance can happen without changes to IR and IRS1 signalling [65]. Together, insulin resistance and diabetes are linked to significant changes in cellular glucose transport, but it is yet unknown what causes the decreased insulin-stimulated glucose transport and what effects it has on the aetiology of the illness.

## CONCLUSION

In the liver, skeletal muscle, and adipose tissue, numerous distinct GLUT isoforms have been effectively discovered in earlier studies. There is still a lot to learn, as evidenced by the high level of substrate variety, intricate expressional control, and varied activity patterns of the isoforms. Future research may be particularly interesting in the impact of various lifestyle factors, such as high-fructose diets and exercise, on GLUT function in energy metabolism. For insulin-regulated glucose transport in adipose cells and for insulin- and contraction-stimulated glucose uptake in skeletal muscle, GLUT4 continues to be the workhorse. The idea that defective GLUT4 translocation plays a significant role in the genesis of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes has been confirmed by a number of research. This process' mechanical structure is incredibly intricate, and it's going to be a hot issue for years to come. To balance glucose uptake and substrate metabolism in insulin-sensitive tissues in response to various physiological cues and/or increasing energy demand, other non-classical GLUTs, such as GLUT12, may also play a role in addition to GLUT4. In addition, additional GLUTs, such GLUT8, may offer inducible glucose transport capability throughout various stages of cellular development, which may help to cause the emergence of insulin resistance in adolescence. As demonstrated by the uric acid transporter GLUT9, other glucose transporters, including GLUT6, GLUT10, and GLUT11, may not even be significant for hexose transfer. An essential part of the fight against metabolic illnesses will be comprehending the intricate connections between these metabolic networks and organ crosstalk.

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