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# Germination and enzyme activities by the aging of *Neurospora* conidia in water

## **Abstract**

Effect of storage in water on germination and enzyme activities

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by the aging of *Neurospora* conidio in water.

of *N. crassa*. As a part of this investigation, conidio were stored aseptically at 4°C for 81 days in distilled deionized water, which was changed every 3rd day in order to determine: the effect of repeated washing on conidial germination and subsequent mycelial growth, the time of onset of autolysis, and the stability of the activity of the four enzymes under these conditions.

Approximately  $5 \times 10^6$  conidio of wild type strain STA4 (FGSC#252), grown on slants of Vogel's minimal medium N (Vogel 1956 Microbial Gene. Bull. 13: 42), were used to inoculate solidified medium N in petri dishes. The dishes were incubated for 48 hours and the conidio were harvested. The conidio were then used to inoculate a second set of petri dishes. After 48 hours' incubation, conidio from the second set of dishes were harvested and used to inoculate a third set. Conidio from the third set were used to prepare the experiment. 1 suspension.

The conidia were harvested by adding 30 ml of water to each dish, swirling for a few minutes and scraping the mycelial surface with a glass probe. The resulting suspension from each petri dish was poured into a centrifuge bottle through a double layer of absorbent cotton and centrifuged at  $3000 \times g$  for 10 minutes. The conidial pellet was resuspended in 100 ml of water and the conidio were counted in a Neubauer hemocytometer.  $3 \times 10^{10}$  conidio from the third set of dishes were placed in a 250 ml centrifuge bottle containing 100 ml of water and stored at 4°C. This suspension was centrifuged every third day ( $3,000 \times g$ , 10 min.) and each time the pellet of conidia was resuspended in 100 ml of water and counted. The dimensions of the conidia were determined by use of an ocular micrometer in a light microscope. The results of measurements on 200 conidio were: mean length  $6.5 \mu$  (range  $4.7-10 \mu$ ); mean width  $5.7 \mu$  (range  $3.8-8.7 \mu$ ). Dry weight determinations were made on four samples of  $co. 4 \times 10^9$  conidio. The conidio were placed in pre-weighed vials and dried in an oven set at 90°C for 48 hours. An average dry weight of  $1.39 \times 10^{-11}$  grams per conidium was obtained.

The ability of the conidio to germinate was determined by removing a sample from the stored suspension and incubating it in medium N plus 2% sucrose (50 ml/250 ml Erlenmeyer flask;  $2 \times 10^6$  conidia/ml) on a Burrell wrist action shaker at 320 strokes per minute. At the intervals indicated in Table 1, samples were removed and counted and scored for germination and lysis. A conidium was scored as germinated if a germ tube was visible. Lysed conidio were recognized by their low refractility and the obvious absence of their contents. The total yield of mycelium from these flasks was determined at 48 hours (as wet weight).

Considering the number of times the stored suspension was washed (every 3rd day), the conidio showed surprising stability, as can be seen in Table 1. After 21 days storage and 7 washings, no lysed conidia were observed. After 81 days and 27 washings, 30% of the conidia had lysed. Of those conidia which had not lysed, 90% germinated within 24 hours after 30 days of storage, and 70% germinated within 48 hours after 81 days of storage. A very pronounced delay in germination and decrease in total yield of mycelia from the germination flasks was apparent after 30 and 66 days of storage. After 81 days of storage the conidio showed an extreme lag in germination and failed to show any significant growth beyond the formation of a germ tube a few microns long.

Table 1. Germination of aging *Neurospora* conidio.

Time of conidio in water	No. of lysed conidia per sample of $10^8$	Time in hours				48 hour wet weight' mycelial growth
		0	7	12	16	
				% germination**		
1 hour		0	90			2.8
3 days		0	96			2.8
21 days	none	0	42	92		2.6
30 days	$3 \times 10^4$	0	7	26		90
66 days	$3\% \times 10^7$	0	5	7		40
81 days	$3 \times 10^7$	0	0		<1	70
						none***

Culture flasks (250 ml) contained 50 ml of Vogel's medium N + 2% sucrose +  $2 \times 10^6$  conidio per ml as inoculum. Cultures were aerated at 25°C. \*\* Germination was determined by the presence of a germ tube. % germination was based on non-lysed conidia as determined by light microscopy. • Wet weight of mycelia obtained by pressing harvested mycelia between sheets of filter paper to reduce residual moisture. • \*\* None means that growth beyond germ tube was insignificant.

Enzyme assays were performed on sampler removed directly from the storage bottle. The conidio were disintegrated by treating for 2 minutes in a Nossal disintegrator. The capsule contained 6 ml of cysteine-HCl carbonate buffer, pH 8.4, 2 g aluminum and  $3 \times 10^9$  conidio. Preliminary experiments showed that  $3 \times 10^8$  conidio represented a sufficient sample for performing the enzyme assays, whereas  $1 \times 10^8$  conidio were insufficient. As a measure of safety, the assays were performed on a sample of  $3 \times 10^9$  conidio. The methods used for performing the enzyme assays have been described by Barratt (1963 J. Gen. Microbiol. 33: 33), Kaplan et al. (1951 J. Biol. Chem. 191: 473) and Singer et al. (1957 Methods of Biochemical Analysis 4: 307).

Table 2. Enzyme activities in *Neurospora* conidia.

Time of conidio in water	NAD- glutamic dehydrogenase		NADP-glutamic dehydrogenase		Succinic dehydrogenase		Nicotinamide-adenine dinucleotidase	
	TU	SPA	TU	SPA	TU	SPA	TU	SPA
1 hour	80	20	200	50	4	1	5034	1678
30 days	105	45	14	6	0	0	5742	2468
66 days	30	10	0	0	0	0	2400	800
81 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	233	1850

$3 \times 10^9$  conidia were withdrawn from stored sample, washed twice and used for enzyme assays. TU = total units; SPA = specific activity (units/mg protein).

As can be seen from Table 2, the NAD-dependent glutamic dehydrogenase doubled in specific activity while the total units increased by approximately 25% between the first hour after conidial harvest and 30 days of storage. The enzyme nicotinamide-adenine nucleotidase (NADase) also increased in both total units and specific activity between 1 hour and day 30. Although NADase declined appreciably after day 30, this enzyme was still measurable after 81 days of storage, in contrast to the other 3 enzymes which could not be detected at this time. By day 30 the activity of NADP-dependent glutamic dehydrogenase had declined to 12% of the specific activity present 1 hour after harvest. Succinic dehydrogenase was no longer measurable at day 30. The increase in the total units of both enzymes during the same period may be due to the activation of the separate enzymes or, less likely, to enzyme synthesis.

It can be concluded that storage at 4°C in distilled water for a long period with repeated washing drastically affected conidial germination, subsequent mycelial growth and the levels and specific activities of the four enzymes measured. No conclusions as to the roles of these enzymes in conidial germination can be drawn from the data presented here. Further work has shown that succinic dehydrogenase and NAD- and NADP-glutamic dehydrogenases do not appear to be necessary for conidial germination, whereas nicotinamide-adenine dinucleotidase may be directly involved in the germination processes. These results will be presented elsewhere.

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