

BACKGROUND

Galectins constitute a large family of carbohydrate-binding proteins with specificity for N-acetyl-lactosamine-containing glycoproteins. To date, 15 mammalian galectins, which share structural similarities in their carbohydrate-recognition domains (CRD), have been identified. Twelve galectin genes are found in humans, including two for galectin-9. The galectins have been classified into the prototype galectins (-1, -2, -5, -7, -10, -11, -13, -14, -15), which contain one CRD and exist either as a monomer or a noncovalent homodimer; the chimera galectin (galectin-3) containing one CRD linked to a nonlectin domain; and the tandem-repeat galectins (-4, -6, -8, -9, -12) consisting of two CRDs joined by a linker peptide. (1). Galectin-2 is an approximately 14-kDa homodimeric protein, and like other prototype galectins, consists of a single CRD (2-4). Human Galectin-2 shares 66% and 67% amino acid sequence identity with mouse and rat Galectin-2, respectively. Galectins lack a classical signal peptide and can be localized to the cytosolic compartments where they have intracellular functions. However, via one or more as yet unidentified non-classical secretory pathways, galectins can also be secreted to function extracellularly. Individual members of the galectin family have different tissue distribution profiles and exhibit subtle differences in their carbohydrate-binding specificities. Each family member may preferentially bind to a unique subset of cell-surface glycoproteins (5-7). Galectin-2 is expressed in hepatoma, stomach epithelial cells and in colorectal and neural tumors. The specific functions of Galectin-2 have not been reported but increased serum levels of Galectin-2 have been associated with metastatic cancer and this may also be involved in cancer cell adhesion to vascular endothelium (8).

References:

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