

UPPER GI DIGESTION

UPPER GI DIGESTION Stomach HCl & Pancreatic Enzymes

If you scored high in this section, you may have trouble with the initial phase of digestion. Most digestive problems begin with either hypochlorhydria or a deficiency of pancreatic enzymes. Other digestive issues include SIBO (small intestine bacterial overgrowth), biliary stasis (which is covered more completely in the gallbladder section), and dysbiosis. The book may

In 2015 the New York State attorney general's office accused four major retailers of selling fraudulent herbal supplements. Most products (80%) from GNC, Target, Walgreens and Wal-Mart did not contain ANY of the herbs listed on their labels. We have looked into the quality of supplements and can help you avoid fraud and find effective, quality products.

mention specific supplementation, but diet and lifestyle are much more important. Dietary and lifestyle issues need to be addressed FIRST. Otherwise, you become one of those people who take dozens of supplements without getting desirable results. Do not self-treat; have a doctor rule out any pathology.

Lifestyle considerations for people scoring high in this section: Address lifestyle before taking supplements. Most chronic health problems are the result of inflammation. Try

the Roadmap to Health Diet (See Appendix A). Along with improving diet, focus on the following specific points to:

- Make sure that you chew your food. If you take six ounces of nails and place them in a beaker of HCl, it will take a very long time for them to break down. If you take six ounces of iron shavings and place them in the acid, it will break down very quickly. A person who wolfs down his or her food and does not chew thoroughly will invariably score high in this section. Make sure to chew their food until it is liquid. Put the fork down between bites.
- Live, raw food contains enzymes. If you eat a lot of cooked food and a diet where meats and starches are dominant, you will have problems with digestion. Relying on your own enzymes, without getting help from the enzymes in raw produce stresses the digestive system.
- Too much complex carbohydrate may cause digestive problems. This is documented very well in Elaine Gottschall's book, *Ending the Vicious Cycle*. In some patients, complex carbohydrates are not completely digested. The undigested carbohydrate irritates the lining of the small intestine. Irritation of the intestinal lining will destroy cells, further depleting enzyme production.

Pancreatic insufficiency: Unlike hypochlorhydria, pancreatic insufficiency is recognized by the medical profession. It can cause weight loss, abdominal pain, feeling of fullness, diarrhea, and foul-smelling stools. It

IF YOU SIMPLY FOLLOW THE ROADMAP TO HEALTH DIET FOR 30 DAYS, YOU WILL NOTICE AN IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR SCORE WHEN YOU RETAKE THE SYMPTOM QUIZ. CONTACT OUR OFFICE FOR A COPY.

can be caused by chronic pancreatitis, celiac disease, and is seen in patients with cystic fibrosis. In natural health care, we recognize that the pancreas can be under-functioning without there being serious pathology. They may not have the “disease” of pancreatic insufficiency, but still need pancreatic support. Patients with digestive issues will often improve by taking a pancreatic enzyme product with meals.

Hypochlorhydra: In general, the medical profession focuses on increasing pH (getting rid of acid) for people with digestive issues. If you do a literature search, you will find very little written about the stomach pH not being low enough (aka hypochlorhydra). One old study, (*Lancet* 1978 Oct 21;2(8095):856-9) found susceptibility to cholera linked to hypochlorhydra.

It seems counterintuitive that taking hydrochloric acid could help someone with acid indigestion or GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease) but taking HCl can often give the individual relief. Antacids are commonly given for reflux, but Dr. George Goodheart postulated that HCl was necessary for the pylorus to open, allowing the stomach contents to enter the duodenum. If the pylorus (the tight valve between the stomach and the small intestine) does not open, pressure builds up and some of the stomach contents enter the esophagus, creating GERD. So, oddly enough, taking HCl can give relief for acid reflux. The problem is not from too much acid; it is from the acid being in the wrong place. Practitioners of natural health care have been taking this approach for years. Be careful, some people experience a flare-up of symptoms when taking HCl—especially if they have been taking HCl suppressing medication. There is not much research supporting this idea, but some studies exist. One article published in *Ann Surg.* (2001 Aug; 234(2): 147–148) discusses the issue of delayed gastric emptying in patients with GERD. The article does not suggest a mechanism.

Another study, appearing in *J Gastroenterol.* (2013 Feb;48(2):214-21. doi: 10.1007/s00535-012-0634-8. Epub 2012 Jul 25), linked hypochlorhydra with dyspepsia in female patients. The authors concluded, “Gastric hypochlorhydra in female dyspeptic patients may be involved in the exacerbation of dyspeptic symptoms.”

There are also case studies, published in *Integr Med* (Encinitas. 2016 Oct; 15(5): 60–66) and *Integr Med* (Encinitas. 2016 Aug; 15(4): 49–53) that show therapies utilizing HCl having a positive effect on patients with GERD and other digestive issues.

Drugs that suppress acid production can cause problems. Research appearing in *Eksp Klin Gastroenterol* (2014;(12):30-6.) showed a relationship between small intestine bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) and omeprazole, which is a PPI (proton pump inhibitor like Prilosec and Prevacid) medication. Another study performed on mice by researchers from the University of Michigan Medical School at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute shows that acid-suppressing medications (PPIs, like Prilosec and Prevacid) may aggravate the conditions that they are designed to treat. Interfering with acid production by using omeprazole interferes with the body’s defense against bacteria, further causing irritation and inflammation of the stomach lining. People who take PPIs and discontinue them often experience symptoms that are much worse than the symptoms that prompted them to take the medication.

Medicine does not embrace the concept of hypochlorhydra but natural health practitioners find that it is linked to allergies, asthma, hidden food sensitivities and arthritis. Many other problems also improve with digestive support, including fatigue, depression, anxiety, and chronic pain. You need HCl to be able to digest protein and to absorb minerals.

Nutrient deficiencies linked to hypochlorhydra: A person with hypochlorhydra will have problems absorbing minerals. They will also have problems breaking down protein and absorbing individual amino acids. They tend to be deficient in vitamin B₁₂ because an HCl and an enzyme known as intrinsic factor are necessary to absorb vitamin B₁₂.

These deficiencies can be at the root of a variety of problems. A vitamin B₁₂ deficiency will cause memory and cognition problems, depression, fatigue, and problems focusing. If the deficiency is severe enough, it can mimic the symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease. Zinc deficiency can cause skin problems, problems with

wound healing, and immune system issues. Magnesium deficiency can cause PMS, heart arrhythmias, insulin insensitivity, and even depression.

Being deficient in amino acids can also cause problems. For one thing, amino acids are important for brain function. They are used to make important brain chemicals, known as neurotransmitters. Tyrosine is needed to produce norepinephrine and tryptophan is needed to produce serotonin. Poor digestion is linked to anxiety and depression. Also, new research is linking leaky gut to problems with the blood-brain barrier, causing depression and even neurodegeneration.

Mineral deficiencies can cause a wide range of problems. Some studies link osteoporosis to antacid use. Using antacids decreases the absorption of calcium and magnesium. Zinc is necessary to produce HCl. Hypochlorhydra decreases zinc absorption, which in turn decreases HCl production. Poor HCl production may cause the body to scavenge protein and minerals from joints and may possibly be a contributing factor in arthritis. Poor iron and copper absorption may contribute to anemia that may not respond to iron supplementation.

STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU IMPROVE YOUR SCORE

Lifestyle is more important than supplementation

Lifestyle: CHEW YOUR FOOD thoroughly. Eat lots of fresh produce. Eating a salad made of finely chopped vegetables twice each day will help normal bowel bacteria to flourish.

The Roadmap to Health diet (downloadable at DrVarnas.com or at SymptomQuiz.com) is rich in trace nutrients and is designed to address digestive problems. Follow it for 30 days and notice the improvement in your score when you retake the symptom quiz.

Betaine HCl and pepsin: Products that contain HCl can help with digestion in some individuals. We do not mention any by name here because you need the help of a health practitioner. Taking HCl supplements can cause burning and distress in some individuals. Go to WholeHealthWeb.com to find a professional to help you.

Pancreatic enzymes: These can be taken as supplements and will help to break down starches, fats, and proteins.

Bromelain: This is a vegetarian digestive enzyme. You can take these much the same way that you would take pancreatic enzymes.

Products to heal stomach and intestinal lining: There is a strong connection between hypochlorhydra and a weak and irritable stomach lining, known as atrophic gastritis. Products that help heal the stomach lining include deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL), glycine, and cabbage extract (vitamin U). Sometimes the lining is so inflamed that taking HCl supplements will irritate it—even if you need the HCl. There are other herbal products as well. Discuss this with a health practitioner.

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