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How To Heal GERD and Avoid Heartburn

By Dr. Mercola | July 19th, 2017

One simple strategy to address a hydrochloric acid deficiency is to swap out processed table salt for an unprocessed version like Himalayan salt. By consuming enough of the raw material, you will encourage your body to make sufficient amounts of stomach acid naturally. Research has also shown that sauerkraut or cabbage juice is among the strongest stimulants for your body to produce stomach acid.

It will also provide you with valuable bacteria to help balance and nourish your gut. Having a few teaspoons of fermented cabbage juice from sauerkraut before your meal will do wonders to improve your digestion. Fresh, raw cabbage juice can also be very useful to heal resistant ulcers. To restore your natural gastric balance and function, also be sure to eat lots of vegetables and other high-quality, ideally organic, unprocessed foods.

Reseeding your gut with beneficial bacteria, either from traditionally fermented foods or a high quality probiotic supplement is also important, as this will not only help balance your bowel flora, but can also help eliminate helicobacter bacteria naturally. Probiotics and fermented foods, especially fermented vegetables, also aid in proper digestion and assimilation of your food.

Also, beware of lectin-rich foods such as grains and legumes, as lectins are potent enzyme inhibitors. By inhibiting digestive enzymes, your digestive system will not function properly and foods will not be broken down, thereby producing or exacerbating heartburn.

Among the most problematic lectin-containing foods are wheat and other seeds of the grass family, any dairy that has A1 casein protein, beans, soy and other legumes, peanuts and members of the nightshade family such as eggplants, potatoes, tomatoes and peppers. Grains and legumes such as black beans, soybeans, lima beans, kidney beans and lentils contain the highest amounts of lectin.

It is also crucial to avoid eating processed foods as much as possible. Be sure to concentrate on eating real foods as that is one of the most powerful strategies you have to activate biological homeostasis in your gut.

Effective Alternatives to Treat Heartburn, GERD and Indigestion

Other helpful strategies to get your heartburn under control include the following suggestions, drawn from a variety of sources.

✓ Raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar

Acid reflux typically results from having too little acid in your stomach. You can easily improve the acid content of your stomach by taking 1 tablespoon of raw unfiltered apple cider vinegar in a large glass of water.

✓ Betaine hydrochloric acid with pepsin

Another option is to take a betaine hydrochloric supplement with pepsin. Typically, you only need a betaine supplement with meals containing protein.

You'll want to take as many as you need to get the slightest burning sensation and then decrease by one capsule. This will improve digestion and help kill the H. pylori bacteria. As a general dosing guideline, an effective adult dose is typically five to seven capsules containing 650 milligrams (mg) of betaine with pepsin.

The only time a pepsin-free betaine supplement is recommended is if you're sensitive to pepsin. That's rare, however, and without pepsin the betaine will not work well, because if your stomach does not produce enough hydrochloric acid, it also will not make sufficient amounts of pepsin (the enzyme that breaks down proteins).

According to Dr. Jonathan Wright, betaine is contraindicated if you're taking any kind of anti-inflammatory medication, such as corticosteroids, aspirin, Indocin, ibuprofen or other NSAIDs.

The reason for this is because these drugs can damage your gastrointestinal lining. Taking a hydrochloric acid supplement can aggravate the area, raising your risk of gastric bleeding or an ulcer. Digestive bitters may be a safer choice in this case.

✓ Papaya fruit or papain supplement

Papaya fruit contains papain, an enzyme that helps break down both protein and carbohydrates. It even helps break down gluten, making it particularly valuable for those struggling with gluten sensitivity.

✓ Pineapple or bromelain supplement

Bromelain is a proteolytic enzyme found in pineapple, and like papain, it also helps digest proteins. It also has anti-inflammatory activity and helps maintain more regular bowel movements.

✓ Baking soda

One-half to 1 full teaspoon of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) in an 8-ounce glass of water may ease the burn of acid reflux as it helps neutralize stomach acid. I would not recommend this as a regular solution, but it can sure help in an emergency when you are in excruciating pain.

✓ Aloe juice

The juice of the aloe plant naturally helps reduce inflammation, which may ease symptoms of acid reflux. Drink about one-half cup of aloe vera juice before meals. If you want to avoid its laxative effect, look for a brand that has removed the laxative component.

✓ Ginger root

Ginger has been found to have a gastroprotective effect by suppressing Helicobacter pylori. It also tightens your LES, thereby preventing the reflux of stomach acid and reduces inflammation. According to a 2007 study, it's also far superior to lansoprazole for preventing the formation of ulcers, exhibiting up to eightfold greater potency over the drug. Add two or three slices of fresh ginger root to 2 cups of hot water. Let steep for about a half-hour. Drink about 20 minutes or so before your meal.

✓ Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for addressing any infectious component. Once your vitamin D levels are optimized, you're also going to optimize your production of about 200 antimicrobial peptides that will help your body eradicate any infection that shouldn't be there.

✓ Astaxanthin

This exceptionally potent antioxidant was found to reduce symptoms of acid reflux in patients when compared to a placebo, particularly in those with pronounced helicobacter pylori infection. Best results were obtained at a daily dose of 40 mg.

✓ Slippery elm

Slippery elm coats and soothes your mouth, throat, stomach and intestines, and contains antioxidants that can help address inflammatory bowel conditions. It also stimulates nerve endings in your gastrointestinal tract. This helps increase mucus secretion, which protects your gastrointestinal tract against ulcers and excess acidity. The University of Maryland Medical Center makes the following adult dosing recommendations:

- Tea: Pour 2 cups boiling water over 4 grams (roughly 2 tablespoons) of powdered bark, then steep for three to five minutes. Drink three times per day
- Tincture: 5 milliliters (mL) three times per day
- Capsules: 400 to 500 mg three to four times daily for four to eight weeks. Take with a full glass of water
- Lozenges: follow dosing instructions on label

✓ Glutamine

Research published in 2009 found that gastrointestinal damage caused by *H. pylori* can be addressed with the amino acid glutamine, found in many foods, including beef, chicken, fish, eggs, dairy products and some fruits and vegetables. L-glutamine, the biologically active isomer of glutamine, is also widely available as a supplement.

✓ Folate or folic acid (vitamin B-9) and other B vitamins

Research suggests B vitamins can reduce your risk for acid reflux. Higher folic acid intake was found to reduce acid reflux by approximately 40 percent. Low vitamin B-2 and B-6 levels were also linked to an increased risk for acid reflux. The best way to raise your folate levels is by eating folate-rich whole foods, such as liver, asparagus, spinach, okra and beans.

✓ Melatonin, l-tryptophan, vitamin B-6, folic acid, vitamin B-12, methionine and betaine

A dietary supplement containing melatonin, l-tryptophan, vitamin B-6, folic acid, vitamin B-12, methionine and betaine was found to be superior to the drug omeprazole in the treatment of GERD.⁷³ Part of the success is thought to be due to melatonin's inhibitory activity on NO biosynthesis, which plays an important role in transient LES relaxation, which, as I mentioned earlier, is part of the real underlying problem of heartburn.

Impressively, 100 percent of patients receiving this supplement reported a complete regression of symptoms after 40 days of treatment, compared to just under 66 percent of those taking omeprazole. The authors concluded that "this formulation promotes regression of GERD symptoms with no significant side effects."