

HOLISTIC HEALTH NOTEBOOK

Great digestion the natural way

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One of my pet peeves is the onslaught of commercials for medical procedures and drugs. Does it also frustrate you to hear the TV say, "Ask your doctor if this drug is right for you."? Shouldn't the doctor be telling us what we need, based on good clinical work and laboratory testing? When did the horse get attached to the back of the cart?

Top on my list of bad commercials are those dealing with poor digestion. Of course too much stomach acid is uncomfortable and even dangerous but one renowned medical doctor has shown clinically that the symptoms of too little HCl and too much HCl are often virtually identical. The only way to tell for sure is through medical testing. So how does it make sense to take an antacid when you could already be suffering from low HCl, thus reducing your ability to digest food even further?

Bad digestion is very common. The older we get, the less hydrochloric acid we produce, which compromises our ability to digest protein and ionize minerals for absorption. Our livers tend to produce fewer enzymes and in the absence of protein-, carbohydrate- and fat-digesting enzymes, digestion doesn't happen efficiently. When food is incompletely broken down, all sorts of symptoms appear,

including copious amounts of gas. Whew! Three Steps Toward Great Digestion (SUBHED)

Step #1: Get in the mood for food. Years ago when meal preparation was a labor-intensive family project, the anticipation of the meal, the aromas of cooking food, the physical act of chopping, stirring, peeling, and sautéing initiated the secretion of digestive juices. When the food came down the esophagus, the stomach was ready to receive it.

Step #2: chew your food! Chewing grinds food into small particles so digestive enzymes have access to the fibers holding the food together. The body doesn't have to work so hard when we do our job. Chew each morsel at least twenty times or, as one healer said, "Chew your liquids and drink your solids." In other words, swish the liquids around in the mouth before swallowing to mix them with salivary enzymes, and chew solids so thoroughly they are reduced to liquid.

Step #3: Nature provides wonderful relief for digestive upsets. The Oriental cultures liberally infuse ginger into their foods because the hot herb stimulates the flow of digestive juices and calms upset stomachs. Peppermint is a carminative herb that helps relieve gas and indigestion. Digestive enzymes are very important to use at each meal. You may select either plant-based enzymes like lipase and protease that assist in the digestion of macronutrients in the stomach, or pancreatic enzymes that help complete digestion in the small intestine. Speak with a knowl-

edgeable health care practitioner about which enzymes are most suitable to your needs.

There is no point eating if you can't digest. The reverse is true as well: great digestion enhances the quality of a good meal. ■

Carol Simontacchi is the owner of the Island Nutrition Center on Sanibel. She can be reached at 472-4499 or on the Web at www.islandnutritioncenter.meta-ehealth.com.

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