

SUNSHINE SHARING

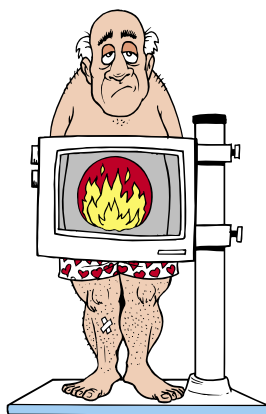
Vol. 15 No. 3

\$1.95

Whole Leaf Aloe Vera

Whole Leaf Aloe Vera juice is an excellent product for easing acid indigestion and helping the gastrointestinal tract heal from damage due to acid reflux and excess stomach acid. Some of the benefits of aloe are:

- Aloe contains substances which reduce intestinal inflammation and heal intestinal tissues. Aloe juice, being a liquid, is especially helpful for reducing inflammation in the esophagus due to acid reflux. It coats and soothes the esophagus and relieves the acid burning.
- Aloe absorbs irritants and helps detoxify the body. It has a very gentle laxative effect to help promote better elimination.
- Aloe is a natural alkalizing agent that helps to balance acid-alkaline reactions in the body. It helps prevent the stomach and the body as a whole from becoming overly acidic.
- Aloe helps maintain the friendly intestinal flora by helping to feed and balance the intestinal microflora.
- Aloe acts as a natural antioxidant, helping protect cells from free radical damage.
- Aloe enhances collagen production, which helps to strengthen connective tissue. This is important in helping to heal ulceration or a hiatal hernia. It also improves elasticity of the skin and other connective tissue.



Cooling the Fire

Acid Reflux and Acid Indigestion

Just about everyone has experienced heartburn from time to time. In fact, the American Gastroenterological Association estimates that about 60 million Americans have a case of heartburn each month. Of course, heartburn really has nothing to do with the heart. It's a form of acid indigestion in which acid leaves the stomach and enters the esophagus causing burning and pain.

When we eat, food passes down the esophagus and into the stomach. There, the stomach secretes hydrochloric acid and pepsin to break down proteins and begin the process of digestion. The stomach has a mucous lining to help protect it against this acid. The esophagus does not. Normally a muscular valve at the top of the stomach holds the stomach's contents, including the stomach acid, in the stomach. This valve opens to permit belching, then closes again.

Heartburn occurs when the valve at the top of the stomach allows acid to seep back (reflux) into the esophagus. This acid burns and inflames the esophageal lining, which does not have the same degree of mucous protection as the stomach. This creates the "burning" sensation in the center of the chest we call heartburn. The more technically accurate term is *acid reflux*.

Although uncomfortable, occasional heartburn or acid reflux, is not a serious condition. However, if it happens frequently and persistently, then the repeated burning and inflammation of the esophagus can result in more serious damage. This more serious condition is called gastroesophageal reflux disease or GERD. GERD is surprisingly common, affecting an estimated 5-7% of the American population. To put it in layman's terms, GERD is just a fancy way to say chronic heartburn.

The problem with chronic heartburn or GERD is that it can cause an erosion of the esophagus due to the continual acid damage. Scar tissue can form which will narrow the passageway. It also increases the risk of esophageal cancer. It is also associated with respiratory systems such as cough and asthma, but the links between them are unclear.

Of course, acid burning isn't limited to the esophagus. The stomach lining can wear down and result in acid burning of the stomach itself, causing ulcers. Furthermore, acid leaving the stomach must be neutralized by secretions from the gallbladder and pancreas. If this does not happen, then the duodenum, the first turn of the small intestine, may also become irritated and ulcerated. Obviously, the acid of the stomach must be properly controlled, and the focus of this issue of Sunshine Sharing is how to keep the acid fire of the stomach under control naturally.

Moving Beyond Antacids by Addressing the Causes

When the average American has acid reflux or acid indigestion, they reach for some type of antacid. An antacid is an alkaline substance that simply neutralizes acid. Different antacids use different alkalizing agents to achieve this purpose. Alka-Seltzer and Bromo-Seltzer contain sodium bicarbonate. Tums, Alka-2, and Titralac contain calcium carbonate. Aluminum-based and magnesium-based antacids are also available.

Acid-blocking drugs are on the market. Drugs like Pepcid AC, Tagamet HB, Axid XR, and Zantac 75 work by inhibiting the production of hydrochloric acid. They are available in both prescription and non-prescription strengths. They do have potentially serious side effects such as confusion, chest tightness, bleeding, sore throat, fever, irregular heartbeat, weakness, and unusual fatigue.

The latest “weapon” of modern pharmaceutical medicine against stomach acidity is the proton pump inhibitor. Drugs of this class are currently available by prescription only. The ads for the little purple pills we see so often on TV are for this type of medication. Proton pump inhibitors block the hydrochloric acid pumps in the stomach, essentially shutting down stomach acid production.

Problems with Antacids and Acid Blockers

While neutralizing or inhibiting the production of stomach acid may provide temporary symptomatic relief, unfortunately, it doesn't solve the real problems causing acid reflux or acid indigestion. The fact that these medications are simply masking symptoms, but not correcting underlying



problems is evidenced by the terminology and mandatory disclaimers associated with the sale of these products, “serious gastrointestinal problems may still exist.” The key is in the word *still*, demonstrating that the pharmaceutical companies know that these symptoms signal the presence of gastrointestinal problems which antacids and acid blockers don't fix.

Furthermore, we need stomach acid to break down protein and to absorb minerals like calcium, iron, zinc, copper, etc. So, neutralizing or inhibiting the stomach acid continually upsets protein metabolism and mineral balances in the body. In fact, it actually upsets the pH balance of the body and over time may make the problem of indigestion even worse.

The Role of Stomach Acid

To understand how we can solve the problems of acid indigestion and acid reflux permanently and naturally, we need to understand the role of the hydrochloric acid in the stomach. The food we eat is composed of cells which contain protein structures. Hydrochloric acid (HCl) is an extremely acidic substance which is absorbed into the cell structures, causing them to burst and release their contents into the stomach fluids. This allows the enzyme pepsin to begin to break down these proteins into simpler fragments.

Hydrochloric acid also serves two other critical functions. First, it disinfects the food by killing harmful microbes. Secondly, it helps to ionize metallic minerals so they can be chelated and transported across the intestinal membrane.

As the hydrochloric acid is absorbed into the food, the pH of the stomach increases. This signals the valve at the bottom of the stomach to open, allowing the contents to pass into the small intestines, where the pancreatic and bile secretions further alkalize the solution.

What Causes Excess Acid?

Several things cause acid indigestion. Poor digestion, irritating foods and mechanical pressure all contribute to indigestion and acid reflux.

First, let's look at the problem of poor digestion. The more protein foods are cooked, the more their proteins are denatured. Denatured proteins become “leathery” making it more difficult for digestive juices to penetrate the tissues and break down the food particles. Greasy fried foods create the same problem because water and oil do not mix. The grease coats the food particles, preventing penetration by the hydrochloric acid.

When food is not thoroughly chewed, it is harder for digestive juices to penetrate the food; so food needs to be chewed thoroughly to help digestive secretions blend with food particles. Overeating also causes acid indigestion, as the stomach becomes overburdened with more food than it can handle. Food winds up not being digested properly, which causes the body to signal for more production of acid.



Certain foods may trigger acid indigestion because they trigger a type of allergic response. Common foods that cause excess acid production in some people include onions, peppermint, chocolate, coffee, citrus fruits, tomatoes, garlic and spicy foods.

While these things may cause acid indigestion, other factors may cause the acid to reflux into the esophagus. These are generally due to mechanical pressures. Anything which puts pressure on the valve at the top of

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Hiatal Hernia Correction

A hiatal hernia is a common cause of acid reflux. The stomach is pressed against the diaphragm, causing the valve at the top of the stomach to close improperly. This allows acid to enter the esophagus. To see if this might be a problem, try this simple test. Put one hand on your abdomen and another on your chest. Breathe deeply. You should be able to take a deep breath with your stomach moving outward (expanding) while your chest moves very little. If the only way you can breathe deeply is to lift and expand your chest you may have a hiatal hernia.

Dr. Jack Ritchason has taught many NSP Managers how to correct hiatal hernia. Many chiropractors also know how to fix a hiatal hernia. Check with the person who gave you this newsletter for a recommendation.

Self-help techniques are available that can help with this problem. The first involves drinking a pint of warm water and taking 1/4-1/2 a teaspoon of lobelia extract first thing in the morning on an empty stomach. Then, stand on your toes and drop suddenly to your heels several times. The force of this little jump and the weight of the water help pull the stomach into place while the warm water and lobelia relax the stomach area. The idea behind this technique is to get your stomach to "drop" as if you were in an elevator that suddenly started going down.

The second technique is done by placing the fingers of both hands about one inch below the sternum (breastbone) right in the inverted "V" at the base of your ribs. Take a deep breath, press your fingers firmly into the area. Make sure you aren't pushing on the breastbone. As you forcefully exhale, push your fingers downward and bend forward slightly. Repeat this action several times, before meals on an empty stomach.

Consult Theodore Baroody's book *Hiatal Hernia Syndrome* for additional suggestions.

Using Green Herbs Instead of Purple Pills

A few simple lifestyle changes and herbal supplements will usually correct acid reflux and acid indigestion. For starters, just eating more slowly, and eating smaller, but more frequent meals will often alleviate the problem. Next, pay attention to foods that trigger acid indigestion. These foods are either not being digested well or are causing a type of allergic reaction; they should be avoided. Especially avoid soda pop, coffee and greasy-fried foods.

Acid reflux usually begins with poor digestion brought on by lack of enzymes, food allergies, or processed foods that are difficult for the body to digest. So, taking enzymes to help foods break down better is the first step. Enzymes will also help reduce allergic reactions. **Proactazyme** contains vegetable-derived enzymes that help break down all three major categories of nutrients—fats, proteins, and carbohydrates.

Believe it or not, acid reflux can actually be a sign that the body isn't producing enough hydrochloric acid to properly digest proteins. The undigested food ferments, producing waste acids and fermentation. In these cases, the acid indigestion is usually accompanied by poor digestion of proteins, intestinal gas and bloating, and a heavy feeling in the stomach after eating. The acid indigestion usually occurs about an hour after eating, and the tongue is pale, often with a heavy coating. In this case, **PDA** or **Food Enzymes** are needed to supplement hydrochloric acid production.

For immediate relief from this type of acid indigestion, remove a small amount of **goldenseal** powder

from the capsule, place it on the tongue and suck on it. Although it is very bitter, it will relieve the burning very quickly.

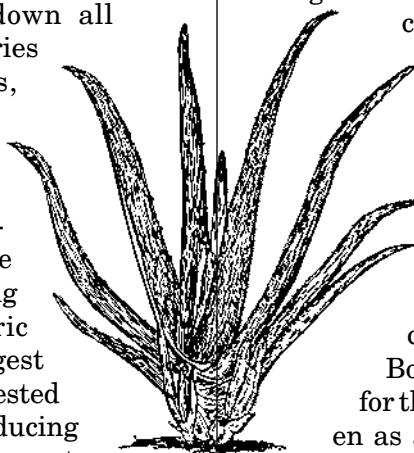
When the tongue is heavily coated, there is often an accumulation of mucus and undigested proteins in the intestinal tract. **Small Intestine Detox** helps break this material down by delivering the protein-digesting enzyme pepsin to the small intestines.

When there is actually too much acid production in the stomach, the symptoms will be different from those described above. Protein digestion is good, and food digests rapidly. The tongue is red and the person is usually younger. This condition is usually due to overeating and stress. It may also be due to eating too many grains and refined carbohydrates and not enough protein and vegetables.

Catnip has been called "nature's Alka-Seltzer" and is very good for this type of acid indigestion. **Chamomile** can also be helpful.

Both are more effective for this problem when taken as a tea. Simply empty the contents of 3-4 capsules into a cup, pour boiling water over the herbs, steep and strain.

If bloating and gas are problems, they may also be contributing to the acid reflux. Intestinal gas and bloating put pressure on the stomach, pressing it upwards against the diaphragm. **Anti-Gas Formula with Lobelia** or the **Chinese Anti-Gas Formula** can be helpful here. Both improve digestive function and reduce gas and bloating, which can ease belching and acid reflux.



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Moving Beyond Antacids

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the stomach will allow acid to enter the esophagus, even if acid production isn't excessive.

Anything that pushes the stomach upward can put pressure on this valve including intestinal gas and bloating, excess body weight, tight fitting clothes, pregnancy, and lying down after eating. Stress also tenses the solar plexus area and draws the stomach upward.

When a portion of the upper stomach passes through the opening in the diaphragm that the esophagus passes through (known as the hiatus), this is called a hiatal hernia. A hiatal hernia creates chronic digestive problems and eventually chronic digestive weakness. Pressure on the stomach from below (as described previously) can cause a hiatal hernia, but it can also be created by repeated stress and "swallowing" of emotions.

A hiatal hernia causes a "kink" in the valve at the top of the stomach, creating chronic heartburn or GERD. It can also put pressure on the heart, weaken the thyroid, and contribute to chronic gas and bloating in the intestines. This mechanical problem must be corrected before any permanent relief can be found. (See Hiatal Hernia sidebar on page 3.)

Green Herbs - Purple Pills

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To heal damage to the esophagus and digestive tract due to excess acid, soothing mucilaginous remedies are needed. One of the best is **Whole Leaf Aloe Vera Juice** (See page 1.) By sipping small amounts of aloe diluted in water, the burning or inflammation in the esophagus due to the acid reflux can be cooled and soothed. Aloe will also help to normalize the pH of the body, reducing overacidity in general.

Another remedy that can help soothe tissues irritated and damaged by excess acidity is **Intestinal Soothe and Build**. This formula helps tissues in the digestive tract to repair themselves and is particularly helpful for healing a hiatal hernia.

Licorice root is a valuable remedy for soothing inflammation in the digestive tract. It can help ulcers to heal and will soothe acid burning in the throat when taken as a tea or extract. Or the powders are placed in the mouth and sucked on to slowly coat the throat. **GastroHealth** helps rid the body of the H. pylori bacteria, which contributes to ulcers. It can also help soothe a stomach irritated by acid burning.

These remedies, along with appropriate lifestyle changes, can eliminate acid reflux and the need for antacids.

Sources

For more information about acid reflux, GERD, and acid indigestion talk to the person who gave you this newsletter. His or her name should appear below. You can also consult some of the sources listed below for additional information.

Prescription for Nutritional Healing by James F. Balch and Phyllis A. Balch

The Encyclopedia of Natural Healing by Siegfried Gursche, MH

Foundations of Health: The Liver and Digestive Herbal by Christopher Hobbs

Healthy Healing by Linda Rector Page

Hiatal Hernia Syndrome by Theodore A. Baroody, Jr.

Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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