

Indigestion

by [Howard F. Loomis Jr., D.C.](#)

Indigestion is perhaps the most common ailment affecting people today. A multi-billion-dollar-a-year industry has emerged to provide over-the-counter remedies to sufferers. Why do so many people suffer from indigestion and why don't traditional remedies for indigestion correct the problem rather than merely provide temporary relief from its symptoms? The reason is that digestion is a very complex process.

It is very difficult to know exactly which step in the digestive process is at fault. The symptoms of indigestion and other digestive problems such as heartburn, gas, bloating, nausea, and cramps are vague and there are no lab tests to define the exact problem.

Indigestion has many causes. One of the most common causes is a deficiency in stomach acid (HCl). This inability to produce adequate stomach acid is common in people over 50 years of age who are free of gastric disease. Some studies even report as high as 25-35% of the elderly have this condition. The lack of acid (HCl) secretion in the stomach was found in 14-20% of patients in the hospital for conditions other than gastric disease or pernicious anemia. This condition is diagnosed when the pH of the gastric contents fails to drop below 6.5 following maximal stimulation. The "resting pH" of the stomach, when empty, is normally 5.0 to 6.0.

HCl is critical for proper protein digestion in the stomach because it adjusts the pH of the stomach to allow protein digestion to occur. HCl changes pepsinogen to the active proteolytic enzyme, pepsin, and maintains the highly acidic pH needed for pepsin's activity. Stomach acid activates this enzyme, it does not destroy it. The secretion of HCl and pepsinogen are governed by separate mechanisms. This is the reason that the pepsinogen concentration in the gastric juices of those who are lacking stomach acid is very close to normal in many cases.

Physiologists have confirmed that HCl is produced from one cell and pepsinogen is produced from another. This means that the body may be producing enough pepsinogen but it is still unable to properly digest protein because of an insufficient amount of HCl.

So, what can be done to improve digestion and relieve the symptoms that result when the body cannot produce adequate amounts of stomach acid? The answer is enzymes. Protein digestion can be improved with food enzymes that "predigest" food in the stomach. Plant enzymes are capable of digesting food before your own digestive process begins. In other words, plant enzymes can enhance the digestion of food and the delivery of nutrients to the blood even when the patient has a compromised digestive system.

Dr. Howell was particularly impressed by the way the ingestion of raw food slowed the progress of chronic degenerative diseases and spent his professional life postulating and then validating his theories.