
STOMACH ACID ASSESSMENT

For this test you will need some baking soda. The purpose of this test is to give us a rough indication as to whether your stomach is producing adequate amounts of hydrochloric acid. The most scientific test for assessment of hydrochloric acid levels is the Heidelberg test, although it is not foolproof. Gastrocaps can also be used to measure hydrochloric acid levels with good accuracy. Both these methods are somewhat cumbersome however, and involve a visit to a doctor for you to swallow a special capsule, which is used to measure acid levels.

Hydrochloric acid is important for digestion and absorption of many nutrients. When hydrochloric acid is lacking (a condition termed hypochlorhydria), malnutrition results. At the same time, one can develop multiple food sensitivities as abnormally large, inadequately digested food particles are absorbed, triggering an immune response. Also, because hydrochloric acid kills many bacteria, yeasts, and parasites, its insufficiency is associated with greater incidence of dysbiosis (gastrointestinal infection). Hypochlorhydria is linked to not only gastrointestinal symptoms (including belching, gas, indigestion, poor appetite, prolonged fullness after meals, bloating, constipation, and diarrhea), but also to autoimmune diseases and degenerative diseases of all kinds. It is a major contributor to chronic unwellness that is under-appreciated. Although hypochlorhydria can occur at any age, older individuals are especially effected. Some estimates suggest half of individuals over age 65 have inadequate stomach acid.

To perform this test: mix one quarter teaspoon of baking soda in eight ounces of cold water, first thing in the morning, before eating or drinking anything except water. Drink the baking soda solution. Time how long it takes to belch. Time up to five minutes. [If you have not belched within five minutes](#) stop timing anyway.

If your stomach is producing adequate amounts of hydrochloric acid you should probably belch within two to three minutes. Early and repeated belching may be due to excessive stomach acid. Belching results from the acid and baking soda reacting to form carbon dioxide gas. The Heidelberg or Gastrocap tests can be employed for confirmation of the results of this test.

I also look for signs and symptoms of low stomach acid. There are many laboratory test indicators of this condition. Some of these include deficiencies of amino acids, minerals, B vitamins, and, on digestive analysis, elevated levels of putrefactive short chain fatty acids in the stool.

I like to have patients do a therapeutic trial with supplemental betaine HCL (hydrochloric acid). If you take betaine HCL after a meal and feel nothing, your stomach is probably not producing enough hydrochloric acid. A normal response to taking betaine HCL is a feeling of warmth in the stomach.

For an individual whose hydrochloric acid levels are lacking, I have them gradually work up to supplementing as many as 5 betaine HCL capsules after meals. Although this may sound like a lot, in response to a very big meal, a healthy stomach produces the equivalent of at least 14 betaine HCL capsules. For optimal results, the protein digesting enzyme, pepsin, should be part of the betaine HCL formulation. This is derived from animal sources and so is not appropriate for everyone. I recommend working with a qualified healthcare practitioner when it comes to betaine HCL.

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