

THE HEALTH NUGGET



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BY RISÉ RAFFERTY

Is Stomach Acid Good For You? Part 2

Probably one of the most seemingly preposterous claims made by Jonathan Wright, M.D. and Lane Lenard, Ph.D., authors of the book we have been briefing, is that acid supplements could be a remedy for heartburn. How contrary to modern thought is that?!

After swallowing, masticated food travels down a pipe called the esophagus. Between the esophagus and stomach exists a muscular valve that relaxes to allow food and liquid to flow into the stomach and then closes again to prevent the stomach contents from backing up. In this way the valve protects the esophagus from the digestive juices, which it can't handle. When this valve functions as it should, it doesn't matter how acidic the fluids in our stomach are, they will not be able to enter the esophagus and cause irritation, inflammation, and heartburn pain. If heartburn occurs more than twice a week, gastro-esophageal-reflux disease (GERD) is the typical diagnosis. "Once an area has become inflamed or irritated, acid will tend to advance the destructive process, ultimately to GERD and the formation of ulcers or worse."¹

Yet, according to Wright and Lenard, "Heartburn almost never signals too much acid, and it may often be associated with too little!"² Thousands of heartburn and indigestion sufferers, they say, have been successfully treated with natural, inexpensive acid supplements. ". . . when we carefully test people over age forty who're having heartburn, indigestion, and gas, over 90 percent of the time we find inadequate acid (and presumably pepsin) production by the stomach. Hydrochloric acid and pepsin supplementation relieves

the symptoms, further proving the point."³

An acidic stomach serves as a protective barrier, killing bacteria and preventing disease. Chronic low stomach acid has been found to encourage bacterial overgrowth in the stomach. While growth of good bacteria in the intestines is essential to health, it is out of place if it migrates to the stomach. Our mouth has some 400 different species of bacteria, but once swallowed they are supposed to be killed in the acidic environment of the stomach. When stomach pH rises to 5 (normal is around 1-3), bacteria begin to thrive. Antacids produce this state. Malnutrition also leaves the stomach lining inflamed and acid secretion dangerously impaired. Plus, the reality that stomach acid tends to diminish as we age has been shown to leave the elderly more susceptible. "People who have a gastric pH high enough to promote bacterial growth may be vulnerable to serious bacterial infections . . . not to mention garden-variety heartburn, diarrhea, constipation, bloating, flatulence, or other common symptoms of dyspepsia."⁴

This overgrowth of bacteria in the stomach has also been associated with hospital-acquired pneumonia, stomach cancer, asthma, allergies, and rheumatoid arthritis. "In the vast majority of cases of hospital-acquired pneumonia, the bacteria that infect the lungs originate deep down in the GI tract."⁵

Rheumatoid arthritis sufferers "often have considerable bacterial overgrowth in their stomachs."⁶ Stomach acid secretion has been found to be significantly lower in those with rheumatoid arthritis.

Dr. Wright has found in his 30 years of clini-

cal practice “that about 50 percent of all children who come to the Tahoma Clinic with asthma find permanent relief of their wheezing within thirty to sixty days, without taking corticosteroid and bronchodilator drugs.”⁷ His approach with asthma includes restoring normal function to the stomach by giving hydrochloric acid and pepsin, giving close attention to food allergies, and supplementing with magnesium, vitamin B₆, and vitamin B₁₂.

Realizing how the original design of a highly acidic stomach can impact digestion, enable proper absorption of essential nutrients, and potentially be a factor in various disease states, takes the ‘relief’ out of plop, plop, fizz, fizz. While the temporary relief offered by antacids can be beneficial, the consequences of long-term use should be considered. In some situations, “the disease, which the drug was given to cure, may disappear, but only to re-appear in a new form, such as skin diseases, ulcers, painful diseased joints . . .”⁸

To a greater degree than we realize, our health is dependent upon the good digestion of good food. While there are various foods that health professionals advise abstinence from in regards to heartburn, I wonder at the counsel we have regarding baking soda and baking powder. “The use of soda or baking powder is harmful and unnecessary. . . . Saleratus [sodium or potassium bicarbonate used as a leavening agent] in any form should not be introduced into the stomach; for the effect is fearful.”⁹

It is true that the stomach lining produces its own alkalinizing bicarbonate that serves as a protective coating of the mucosal lining. But this secretion does not mingle with the gastric juices and alter the pH level.

Could there be a connection between the use of these leavening products and alterations in stomach acid? Is the warning given to prevent the health complications that are associated with poor

digestion and low stomach acidity? These are my honest questions. One thing I do know is that God in mercy has extended to us rich information on health to protect us.

There are times when truth, whether physical or spiritual, seems to go smack in the face against common understanding. Our natural ‘go with the flow’ attitude is given an opportunity to examine new ideas with open-mindedness. At such a time, when the enemy is seeking to conduct his status quo train to perdition, God is training a people to esteem the opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, and the voice of the majority as subservient to the will and truth of God.

Questions like, “Is stomach acid good for you?” are useful. They help us look deeper and find answers we may not have thought of. The Bible encourages us to ask: “Stop at the cross roads; . . . ask, ‘Where is the way that leads to what is good?’ Then take that way . . .” (Jeremiah 6:16 NEV).

¹ Lenard Ph.D., Lane, Wright, M.D., Jonathan, *Why Stomach Acid Is Good For You*. M. Evans and Company, Inc. 2001, p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁸ White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages*, vol.2, p. 452.

⁹ White, Ellen G. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 344.

