

Acid Out

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The Build Up

One of the main problems we face as we age is the inevitable build-up of acidic waste products in our bodies. We have an elegant system for getting rid of acidic waste products through the liver and kidneys, the lungs and the out-breath, the stomach acid, and the bicarbonate buffering system in the pancreas and blood. However, an unhealthy lifestyle can overwhelm the body's ability to eliminate acids and they start to accumulate.

This acidification of body tissues is the root cause of most health problems seen today. Acidic waste products are also the cause of premature aging. Acid wastes build up in the body in the form of cholesterol, gallstones, kidney stones, and calcium deposits in the joints, arterial plaque, heartburn and acid reflux, to name just a few.

Acids become out of balance in the body when there is over-consumption of acidic foods and protein, excessive use of prescription and recreational drugs, including coffee and alcohol, dehydration, digestive problems resulting in incomplete food breakdown, and excess stress resulting in the release of acidic stress hormones. When the amount of acid entering the body surpasses the body's ability to neutralize and eliminate excess acid, a condition known as latent acidosis begins. Latent acidosis is the preliminary step to the development of most chronic diseases, as seen in the list below.

Symptoms of Acidosis

Mildly Acidic Symptoms

- Acne and skin rashes
- Cold hands and feet
- Muscle pain
- Low energy
- Migrating joint pains
- Restlessness and hyperactivity
- Digestive problems: heartburn, bloating, constipation, diarrhea
- Strong smelling urine
- Mild headaches
- Allergies and chemical sensitivities
- Excess mucus and white coated tongue
- Difficulty getting up in the morning
- Metallic taste in mouth

Moderate Acidic Symptoms

- Loss of memory and concentration
- Migraine headaches
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Viral infections: cold sores, colds and flu
- Bacterial infections: Staph and Strep
- Fungal infections: Candida, athlete's foot, thrush
- Hayfever, sinusitis, asthma and bronchitis
- Urinary infections, prostatitis
- Gastritis, gastric ulcers, and colitis
- Hair loss
- Psoriasis and hives
- Disturbances in smell, taste, vision and hearing

Advanced Symptoms

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Autoimmune diseases: MS, Lupus
- Cancer
- Tuberculosis

The most fundamental step you can take to cure or reverse a health problem is to begin to eliminate the excess acids that have accumulated in your body. If you truly want to deal with your health problem at the source, then you have to eliminate excess acids from your system.

Ways to Eliminate Acids

Decrease Acidic Foods

The most obvious strategy is, first of all, to stop taking in excess acids through your diet. The most common source of excess acids in the North American diet is excess protein intake.

While some vegetarians eat too little protein, too much protein is, by far, the more common problem. Since proteins are made up of amino acids, this is where the excess acids come from.

The most acidic foods are junk foods, sugar, coffee and alcohol. If you look at some people's diets, you will see that nearly everything they consume is acidic. Now you know why there is an epidemic of chronic disease in our society. These are the people most likely to depend on chemical drug solutions for the symptoms of latent acidosis. The irony is that the medication they take for their acidic symptoms is also highly acidic and, more than likely, will worsen the situation in the long run. Acidic food intake should not be more than 25 percent of your total diet.

Increase Alkaline Foods

As you reduce acidic foods, you should eat more alkaline foods, which are fruits and vegetables. There are so many reasons to emphasize these foods in your diet, but most important is that they help to make the body more alkaline and less acidic. The fact that fruits and vegetables are also the highest sources of vitamins, minerals, enzymes, phytonutrients, antioxidants, water and fiber is a bonus. Alkaline foods should compose 75 percent of your diet.

Alkaline Water

Spring and mineral water is slightly alkaline from the dissolved minerals in the water. Long-lived populations, who consistently live to be over 100 years old, have been found to depend on glacial sources of water, which are naturally alkaline from the high amounts of minerals found in the water. Water that has been taken from surface sources, or heavily purified, tends to be acidic and devoid of minerals.

Try to find a source of spring or mineral water that is naturally alkaline. If this is not available, the next best source of pure alkaline water is to use a kitchen counter water purifier-ionizer that will make alkaline water. These are made in Japan and Korea and remove chlorine and other harmful substances in tap water, while also making it more alkaline through an ionization process.

Extra Organic Minerals

The best source of minerals, of course, is fruits and vegetables. However, our soils have become mineral-depleted, as modern agriculture only adds phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium and ignores the rest. Organic foods are the best choice, as they are usually grown with an abundant mineral supply. Minerals act as buffers of acids in the body. Sodium, potassium, magnesium, calcium and chloride are depleted by overly acidic foods, such as proteins.

I prefer organic sources of minerals, from real food, as opposed to inorganic sources most commonly found in mineral supplements. Sometimes you have to take the mineral supplement to get enough critical minerals, but the best source is from your food and not from a pill. Other excellent sources of minerals are from the sea. Celtic sea salt is an excellent natural salt that contains many trace minerals. I also recommend seaweeds such as kelp, dulse, nori, and hijiki. This can be an acquired taste, but they provide an excellent source of sea minerals.

The habit of taking large amounts of calcium to prevent or treat osteoporosis is a misguided attempt at treating an underlying acid problem. Osteoporosis is usually caused by the over-consumption of acidic foods, which leads to calcium loss. Calcium is pulled from the bones in the body's attempt to neutralize the excess acids. The ultimate solution to osteoporosis is decreasing the acidic condition of the body, not taking massive amounts of calcium supplements, which are hard to absorb.

Therapeutic Methods

Alkaline Salts

A therapeutic method of reducing excess acidity is to take a combination of alkaline mineral salts. These are often called "tri-salts," as they contain the bicarbonates of sodium, potassium and magnesium.

Taking tri-salts between meals will add alkalinity to the system and absorb and eliminate excess acids through the urine. It is important not to take them around meals, as this will interfere with digestion.

Other names for alkaline mineral salts include Alkala and Basic Powder. If you cannot get these, you could use baking soda, which is sodium bicarbonate. This is not as good as the mixture, as it lacks the two important minerals, magnesium and potassium. Take one teaspoon of the alkaline salts or baking soda, between meals, two to three times daily.

Alkaline salts work much better than antacids at eliminating acidity. Obviously, heartburn is a common symptom of acid excess. Antacids are swallowed by the bushel, but they only get rid of the acidic symptoms. They do not help the body to eliminate acids. If you suffer from heartburn, try switching from antacids to alkaline salts, as well as following the other suggestions in this article, to reduce the overall acidity in your body.

Drainage Remedies

It is important to keep the channels of acid elimination open while you are on an acid-reducing program. The two main organs involved in acid elimination are the kidneys and the liver. By taking drainage remedies, you increase the flow of excretion through the liver and kidneys. Dandelion root is one of the best drainage herbs as it works on both the liver and the kidneys.

Other herbs specific for the kidneys are horsetail, nettles, golden rod, corn silk, juniper berries, parsley, asparagus, uva ursi and buchu. You do not have to take all these herbs at once. Try using only one or two at a time, either as a tea or a tincture diluted in alkaline water.

Chelidonium, yellow dock, artichoke, dandelion, berberis and echinacea are good for the liver and work as drainage remedies. Milk thistle is a great liver antioxidant and detoxifier, but it does not function well as a drainage remedy.

Lymphatic Drainage

The lymph is one of the most ignored detoxification systems in the body. The lymphatics are open channels between the cells that carry waste products and metabolic acids back to the blood and liver. They are like open ditches that carry waste away from the cells to the central waste-processing center, which is the liver.

Physical movement of the body is needed to move the lymph. It is a passive system, unlike the circulatory system, which has the heart to pump the blood.

Exercise is needed to move the lymphatic fluid through the body. Other passive movement such as massage will also help to move the lymph fluid. One of the best exercises for the lymph is the re-bouncer, a mini-trampoline. The gentle bouncing achieved on a re-bouncer is a highly effective way of moving the lymph.

Sweating is another way to help the lymph to eliminate toxins and acid wastes. This helps to bypass the liver and kidneys and moves the wastes directly from the lymph to the external skin in the form of sweat. I especially recommend the newer type of low temperature saunas that use infrared heating coils as the best method of heat detoxification.

Deep Breathing

Increased oxygenation of the body through deep breathing is an excellent method of eliminating the weak acids of the body through carbon dioxide. Deep breathing can be achieved through aerobic exercise. Just keep in mind that exercise, while eliminating weak acids, will also create new acids in the muscles in the form of lactic acid. Deep breathing can also be achieved through various breathing techniques associated with yoga and meditation practices.

Stress Release

Use any and all methods to release stress. Stress is one of the main causes of excess acidity. It is insidious and can turn the most diet-conscious vegetarian into a highly acidic being. Be sure to keep a balanced perspective on life. Laugh, walk lightly, and don't sweat the small stuff.

I have just discussed nine methods to reduce overall acidity of the body. By beginning to incorporate a few of these steps, you will begin the long process of de-acidification. Remember, it took years to build up the acids in your body. It will take at least a year to fully de-acidify your body by using the steps outlined above. De-acidification will result in the prevention of chronic disease and premature aging, and it will add an increased energy and vitality to your whole life.