Soothing the Stomach
Natural Treatments for Heartburn and Indigestion

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Welcome~

- Why is digestion important?
- How does digestion work?
- What causes indigestion and heartburn?
- What can you do about it?
  - Supplements, herbs, diet and lifestyle tips
The purpose of digestive system

- Mouth
- Esophagus
- Stomach
- Pancreas
- Liver and gallbladder
- Small and large intestine
- Rectum
Digestion before absorption

- Di-gest means “breaking apart”

- This MUST happen before we can ABSORB any nutrients from food into blood stream
  - Therefore, you are NOT what you eat.
  - You are what you first digest and then absorb.
Three types of foods we digest

● Proteins
  ○ From meats, dairy, egg, nuts, legumes

● Carbohydrates
  ○ From grains, potatoes, pasta, bread, sweets

● Fats
  ○ From dairy, oils, meats, seeds, nuts
What digests each food type?

- **Saliva in mouth**
  - Carbohydrates first, to give brain instant energy
- **Stomach acid**
  - Hydrochloric acid digests proteins mostly
- **Pancreatic juices**
  - Enzymes digest carbohydrates, fats, proteins
- **Bile in gallbladder**
  - Emulsifies fats
What controls digestive functions?

Autonomic nervous system = 2 parts

• Parasympathetic does “rest and digest”
  ○ Works when we are relaxed
• Sympathetic does “fight or flight”
  ○ Works when we are stressed, overrides parasympathetic system
Stimulates digestion

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVES
“Rest and digest”

- Constrict pupils
- Stimulate saliva
- Slow heartbeat
- Constrict airways
- Stimulate activity of stomach
- Inhibit release of glucose; stimulate gallbladder
- Stimulate activity of intestines
- Contract bladder
- Promote erection of genitals

Cervical nerves
Thoracic nerves
Lumbar nerves
Sacral nerves

SYMPATHETIC NERVES
“Fight or flight”

- Dilate pupils
- Inhibit salivation
- Increase heartbeat
- Relax airways
- Inhibit activity of stomach
- Stimulate release of glucose; inhibit gallbladder
- Inhibit activity of intestines
- Secrete epinephrine and norepinephrine
- Relax bladder
- Promote ejaculation and vaginal contraction

Stimulates digestion
Inhibits digestion
Stress and digestion

- With stress, parasympathetic nervous system shuts down
  - We make less digestive juices
- Common symptoms include
  - Indigestion, heartburn or reflux, abdominal pain, cramping, bloating, gas, frequent belching
What is indigestion?

- “Dyspepsia”
  - Inability to break down foods

- Symptoms
  - Feeling food remains in stomach long after eating
  - Belching
  - Bloating
  - Nausea and vomiting
  - Pain and discomfort after meals
Possible causes of indigestion

- Stress or trauma
- Stomach or duodenal ulcer
- Heart-related pain
- Reflux
- Gallbladder pain
- Esophageal spasm
- Anxiety or depression
- Food intolerance
- Hiatal hernia
Diet-related causes of indigestion

- Eating too much or too fast
- Drinking iced drinks with meals
- Eating low quality food
  - Fast food or processed foods
- Eating foods to which you are allergic or hypersensitive
What is heartburn?

- Burning pain in stomach, chest, or throat from irritation of esophagus by stomach acid
  - Usually from open esophageal sphincter

- Onset
  - Anytime, but most common after eating

- *Low* stomach acid fails to close the esophageal sphincter
Heartburn

Gastro-oesophageal valve tightly shut; stomach contents secure

Acidic stomach contents leak into oesophagus causing discomfort (heartburn)

Normal

Reflux
Evaluation of indigestion and heartburn

- Upper GI series - barium and x-ray test
  ○ Drink/eat barium infused substance see it move, can tell if have sphincter closure problem

- Heidelberg’s stomach acid test
  ○ Swallow a pill-sized electronic device that measures stomach acid, give bicarbonate challenge
Evaluation of indigestion and heartburn

- Food allergy blood testing
  - “IgE” shows immediate reactions to 10 most common food allergens including soy, wheat, corn, dairy, eggs, citrus
  - Available through conventional allergists

- Food sensitivity blood testing
  - “IgG” and “IgA” show delayed-hypersensitivity reactions to ~100 foods
  - Available through ND offices
Meal tips for indigestion

● Eat slowly, try chopsticks
● Chew thoroughly
● Don’t eat standing up
● If you overeat, use smaller tableware to control portion sizes.
  ○ Read *French Women Don’t Get Fat* for inspiration
Diet tips for indigestion

● Eat the best quality food you can afford.
  ○ Aim for an organic, whole foods diet
  ○ Go to www.EWG.org for “Dirty Dozen”

● Boycott fast food and junk food
  ○ Plan ahead to create convenience foods at home

● Avoid allergic or hypersensitivity foods
  ○ Do Elimination Diet for 3-4 weeks
  ○ Then re-challenge with 1 food at a time and note any reactions for 2 days
Natural treatments for indigestion

● Herbal “bitters” before meals
  ○ Good herbs include gentian and ginger

● Digestive enzymes
  ○ Containing amylase, protease, lipase

● Ox bile supplements
  ○ For pain eating fatty food

● Apple cider vinegar
  ○ To stimulate HCl production

● Probiotics
Natural treatments for heartburn

- **DGL tablets**
  - Licorice coats and soothes
- **Zinc carnosine**
  - 75 mg 2x/day between meals
- **Fish oil**
  - 3-5 grams daily with meals
- **Probiotics**
  - Especially lactobacillus acidophilus, minimum 5-10 billion CFUs
Natural treatments for heartburn

- Eat plantain fruit daily
- Slippery elm powder
  - 1½ teaspoon in cup juice 2x/day
- Aloe vera juice
  - 1 oz daily (careful with diarrhea)
- Homemade herbal tea
  - Boil licorice and marshmallow roots, then add calendula and comfrey and let steep. Drink daily.
Natural treatments for heartburn

● L-Glutamine powder
  ○ 1-4 teaspoons daily in smoothie or water, soothing and healing to lining of GI tract

● Betaine HCl tablets
  ○ Start low dose 100 mg with each meal and increase until you get warm tummy, then reduce by one pill

● Individualized homeopathic remedy
  ○ Based on your unique presentation of symptoms
What to avoid with heartburn

- AVOID MINT - acts as anti-spasmodic so it relaxes sphincter at top of stomach, allowing reflux
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, spicy foods, smoking, chocolate
Emotional influences on stomach

- Stomach is the organ involved with “taking in” our life experiences.

- Problems can develop after traumatic events or things we have a hard time accepting.
Q & A

What else can I answer for you?
Thank You~

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