

Digestion and the Purple Pill

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Please don't fall into the trap of the purple pill! One of the most common complaints I hear from new clients is that of indigestion: burping, belching, bad breath, bloating and gas from both ends. To my surprise many people think this is normal. "It runs in my family" their comment.

When indigestion is ignored over time, the symptom next to arise is often a stomach that is "too acid". "I have acid reflux; GERD. I am taking Prilosec/ Nexium/Tums. I saw an ad, so I asked for the purple pill".

What follows here is a discussion on digestion. Hopefully I will give you some insights that might have you appreciating your digestion and the importance of *not* shutting down your stomach's acid production. You might even be willing to go into recovery and let go of that purple pill.

Digestion is a north to south process. It begins in the brain. A neurological process begins to take place just as soon as you start thinking about eating. At the brain's command, the body readies itself for digestion.

When you chew your food, you are mechanically breaking down the food. This allows saliva to form, to mix with the food and begin the enzymatic process of breaking down the foods - carbohydrates in particular. The saliva also communicates to the brain about the content of the food of which you are chewing, further readying the body for the digestion and distribution of nutrients. The more you chew your food, the better digestion gets.

Where saliva should be alkaline (a pH of 6.8-7.2 if you are pH savvy), the stomach should be very acidic...a 1-2 on that same pH scale. It *needs* to be acidic, for here is where proteins are broken down. The protein digesting process and enzymes of the stomach need hydrochloric acidity in order to be activated. Iron and Calcium also need the acidity of the stomach to be properly ionized for assimilation into the body tissues.

If your stomach is not acidic enough, the food just sits there. As a result, the bolus of food rots and ferments, creating its own organic acids. People and doctors then assume that the stomach is too acid and out come the prescriptions.

The Tums act to soothe the organic acids that have been produced by the rotting food in your stomach. The Prilosec and Nexium just flat out turn off the body's production of the much needed hydrochloric acid. Both may have you feeling symptomatically better, but they have actually reduced the acidity of your stomach. This inhibits the proper digesting of your foods. A "too acidic" stomach is rarely the problem. The problem is usually that the stomach isn't acidic

enough.

If this process is disrupted in the stomach, then the whole rest of the digestive tract gets thrown off. The proper absorption of the nutrients from your small intestine and the flora of your large intestine are dependent upon the pH message from upstream. Constipation, diarrhea, gas and bad breath can often be the result of tampering with the proper pH of the stomach.

Another complaint is esophageal reflux: heartburn. There is a sphincter (flap) in between your esophagus and your stomach. It is meant to keep the food and acid from the stomach separate from the esophagus. If it is not operating properly, the acidity gets up into the esophagus and creates "heartburn". Not only do nicotine, caffeine and alcohol disrupt the valve from functioning properly, but emotions do so as well. I often assist my clients in addressing the emotions underlying their digestive dilemmas.

Here are a few ways to get your digestion juices flowing properly: 1) chew your food well. Sit while eating and be mindful. Digestive juices flow when we are present with our meals and when we are calm while eating. 2) sip only small amounts of liquid with your meals. Large amounts of liquid with meals dilutes digestive enzymes 3) drink plenty of water in between meals throughout the day. This plumps up the digestive tract with the lubrication needed for digestion. 4) include a good quality *sea salt* in your diet. The chloride and minerals it provides are needed for hydrochloric acid production. 5) ask me for help. I would love to help you get off that purple pill!