

Low stomach acid: Test it and Treat it

The first step to good digestion is to chew our food sufficiently, the next important step is to release enough acid in our stomach. Sufficient acidity (pH 2-4) is needed in our stomach before the gateway between the stomach and small intestine opens (pyloric sphincter). And once the chyme (digesting food) in the duodenum of our small intestine, digestive enzymes and bile acids are released to continue the digestive process.

If our food is not digested properly, many health issues can arise, including bacterial overgrowth, malabsorption of nutrients, IBS symptoms.

The Heidelberg Stomach Acid Test

This is the gold standard test for low stomach acid. It costs around \$350 and not often covered by insurance. It gives you exact measurements for your stomach acid. The test works by you ingesting a small capsule with a radio transmitter that records the pH of your stomach as you drink a solution of sodium bicarbonate. The result of the test is a graph showing your pH levels over time.

Betaine HCL Challenge Test for Low Stomach Acid

The most reliable and affordable test you can perform at home is the Betaine HCL challenge test.

Dr. Jonathan Wright suggests using 650 mg of Betaine HCL or less pill that includes Pepsin.

1. Buy some Betaine HCL with pepsin (E.g. Thorne - Betaine HCL with Pepsin)
2. Eat a high protein meal of at least 6 ounces of meat. (Make sure you have enough protein)

3. In the middle of the meal take 1 Betaine HCL pill.
4. Finish your meal as normal and pay attention to your body.
5. Repeat the test another day to confirm.

OUTCOMES:

1. IF you don't notice anything after the meal, this means it is very likely **you have low stomach acid levels.**
2. IF you start to feel stomach symptoms such as burning, hotness, heaviness – then it is likely that **you don't have low acid levels.** The symptoms usually pass in an hour. Or you can mix up a ½ teaspoon of baking soda and drink it to help stop the discomfort.

NOTE: If you take *NSAIDs and Corticosteroids*, please consult with your doctor before testing and supplementing with Betaine HCL, since it may increase the risk of ulcers in the stomach and gastritis.

How to supplement for Low Stomach Acid?

If you showed results of low stomach acid, in the short term, try taking a course of supplement to support your digestion. You can start with 1-2 capsules Betaine HCL with Pepsin, with each meal (adjust the amount base on your protein intake for the meal, or find out the number of capsules you need in order to start feeling the warm sensation in your stomach, and take 1 less capsules in the future meals.)

You can also try apple cider vinegar and digestive bitters. In the long term, it is important to find out the root cause so you don't have to rely on the supplement for digestive aid.

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Reference:

[Wright, J. \(2001\) Why Stomach Acid Is Good for You: Natural Relief from Heartburn, Indigestion, Reflux and GERD. M. Evans & Company](#)
<http://scdlifestyle.com/2012/03/3-tests-for-low-stomach-acid/>