



THE **5** ROOT CAUSES OF:

Digestive Problems

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Digestive problems

Do you suffer with gas or bloating? Does heartburn, acid reflux, constipation or diarrhea trouble you? Do you know you feel uncomfortable digestively speaking, but just don't know why?



Gas, bloating and heartburn, for instance, and can be uncomfortable or downright painful. It's also potentially embarrassing, especially if your gas is stinky or malodorous. Running to the bathroom to pass gas or deal with frequent bowel movements, takes time out of your day and it can be a source of embarrassment or social awkwardness if you don't leave a room in time. Lastly the tightening of your clothes due to bloat as the day goes on can also make you feel self-conscious and irritable, not to mention the understandable moodiness brought on by pain.

Do these symptoms sound like you?

We talked about the social aspect of digestion issues, but what about the more important piece, what does abnormal digestion indicate about your health? When you have digestive symptoms there's an underlying imbalance that must be addressed. Why? It's unhealthy to have these symptoms.

In fact it's not an overstatement to say that good health and digestive problems are mutually incompatible.

→ **Digestive problems are an indicator of imbalance and such imbalance results in the cells of your body being inadequately fed or fueled. This lack of adequate fuel can lead to disease over time.**

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#1 LOW STOMACH ACID /LOW PANCREATIC ENZYMES

Your stomach is designed to be a bag of acid that facilitates digestion of your food. Many things can cause low stomach acid, which then causes maldigestion and malabsorption.

1 - Use of antacids – millions of Americans use antacids, whether over the counter or prescription. It is a multi-billion dollar industry. **Most have no idea of the side effects which include increased risk of infection, osteoporosis (brittle bones) and nutrient deficiencies including protein and B vitamins malabsorption.**

2 - Infections – there is a circular problem or “Catch-22” associated with antacids and infections. **Insufficient acid opens the door to bacterial and other types of infections, taking hold in your body.** A common bacterial infection of the stomach, H. pylori, actually slowly destroys your stomach’s ability to make acid while increasing your risk of stomach cancer and ulcers.

These medications can also lead to bacterial overgrowth within the small intestine, called SIBO, that affects not just digestion, but absorption of nutrients and can lead to a leaky gut.



Symptoms such as fatigue, memory loss, shortness of breath, depression and a feeling of pins and needles can all be associated with a vitamin B12 deficiency, associated with SIBO and **low stomach acid.**

3 - Aging - it's tough to have much control on this point, but as you hit your 40s, 50s and 60s it's wise to assess your levels of stomach acid so that you can act appropriately to keep your digestion functioning optimally. We provide such testing.

Solution for your low stomach acid

You can take stomach acid, betaine hydrochloride, under a doctor's supervision, to "prime the pump" of your stomach's acid levels, thus regaining normal function, digestion and overall health. You should work with a competent functional medicine practitioner to understand how long you will need to supplement your acid levels plus any additional steps you need to take.

A competent practitioner will also look at other variables including infections or hiatal hernia.



LOW PANCREATIC ENZYMES

Pancreatic enzymes are made by the pancreas and delivered to the small intestine where they are activated to help you digest all your food, carbohydrates, protein and fat. Their actions allow nutrients to then be absorbed by the cells of your body. When the enzyme levels are insufficient, your ability to absorb nutrients is highly compromised. A few things can cause low pancreatic enzymes.

- 1- Conditions such as celiac disease, diabetes, inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's disease, autoimmune diseases such as lupus and stomach ulcers can all result in a deficiency.
- 2- Infections were mentioned earlier and specifically bacterial infections can lead to insufficiency.
- 3- Medications - there are several linked to pancreatic insufficiency including tetracycline, sulfasalazine, pentamidine, azathioprine, thiazide, valproic acid and more. If you're taking these, find a practitioner who can address options to more natural methods, if possible.
- 4- Gall stones - this is something that needs to be addressed medically if the stones have gotten too large or are blocking the duct of the gall bladder. A blockage can result in pancreatic enzymes unable to get to the small intestine to do their work. We'll speak more about the gall bladder later.

5- Alcohol consumption – typically this is heavy consumption, so if you fall into this category you need to get the assistance you need to terminate this behavior before it compromises your health beyond your ability to recover.

The problem with low pancreatic enzyme production is resultant nutrient deficiency, including low iron, vitamin B12, folate, calcium and more.

Solution for your low pancreatic enzymes

You can supplement with pancreatic enzymes under supervision of a qualified functional medicine practitioner, who will also be able to evaluate any underlying causes, such as those mentioned above, that need to be addressed concurrently.



#2 INFECTIONS / MICROBIOME OR PROBIOTIC IMBALANCE

There is a circular association between infections, low stomach acid and decreased pancreatic enzymes. One can cause the other. Low stomach acid increases your risk of infection. So too does low pancreatic enzymes. Infections themselves can also cause low stomach acid and low pancreatic enzymes.

That may sound confusing on the face of it, but we need acid and enzymes to digest our food such that it is not “sitting around” in our stomach or intestines putrefying or rotting. Such inefficient digestion of food can be a breeding ground of infection.

Unfortunately, once you have an infection, that too can lead to a lessening of stomach acid and pancreatic enzymes.

A common bacterial infection of the stomach called H. Pylori, has been linked to low stomach acid. It can create symptoms such as burping, bloating, nausea, and burning on an empty stomach.

The infection can also be the cause of stomach ulcers, heartburn and reflux.

H pylori has been linked to NSAID use, including Motrin, Advil, aspirin, etc., so if you are taking these medications regularly that needs to be addressed by getting to the root cause of where your pain is coming from.

Solution for infections

You can take control of the problem by addressing both ends of it. Identifying if an infection is present, plus diagnosing the existence of low acid or enzymes, and effectively treating all conditions present. Infections don't always require an antibiotic. And, if possible, it's always best to use a more natural approach of herbs and other nutrients.

The natural approach will avoid the long-term negative consequences of antibiotics, including weakening your immune system and the unfortunate annihilation of the wonderful microbes or probiotics that make up your microbiome.

It's important to work with a certified Functional Medicine Practitioner who can evaluate all aspects of digestive health.

MICROBIOME IMBALANCE OR PROBIOTIC IMBALANCE

Your microbiome is composed of 39 trillion organisms found in your intestine. We are only just realizing the vast importance of these organisms that outnumber our human cells by almost 4 times.

To give you perspective, as a human you possess more microbial DNA in your body than you do human DNA. Interesting, isn't it?

Solution to microbiome imbalance

The importance of a healthy and balanced microbiome is inarguable. Considering its vast size, we are still learning a great deal about the system.

What we do know makes it very clear that its health is intimately tied to the health of your entire body, protecting you against not just digestive diseases, but autoimmune disease and diseases of the brain such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and dementia. The ability of the healthy microbiome to keep disease causing genes "turned off" is truly exciting.

Appreciating the value of a healthy microbiome is something we most definitely place emphasis on here at Root Cause Medical Clinic. Evaluating its current status is part of most patient's programs, and designing the correct lifestyle and food choices consistent with its optimal function is a big part of what we do.

#3 FOOD SENSITIVITIES

Imagine you ate something toxic, you would expect your body to react in some fashion. We've all had the unfortunate experience of food poisoning; there's no mistaking the intense reaction to a toxic of that magnitude.

→ **Food sensitivities share that reaction, just typically in a less dramatic fashion.**

When you eat a food your sensitive too, your body's immune system feels like it's been poisoned to a degree. The reaction can be obvious with such symptoms as gas, bloating, acid reflux, constipation or diarrhea. But the symptoms can be non-digestive in nature such as fatigue, brain fog, headaches or even joint aches.

Whether the symptoms are created in the digestive tract or elsewhere, they are no less disruptive to your digestive tract. It's a little counterintuitive, but a food reaction can create inflammation, weakening of your immune system and more, yet produce no over digestive symptoms.

Digestive inflammation, as an example, can create a leaky gut which can then lead to autoimmune disease. A weakened immune system can in turn lead to chronic infections. It's all very interrelated, as hopefully you're beginning to see.

#4 FIBER/WATER

The final two points we are going to discuss fall in the category of movement. Both fiber and water help propel both toxins and nutrients to move through your digestive tract smoothly. In the case of nutrients, it allows for the proper absorption, in the case of toxins it allows for the proper elimination.

Both are vitally important. Fiber, found in fresh fruits, vegetables, beans and legumes, is required for the health of the microbiome we just discussed. It turns out that fiber is rich in nutrients that maintain a healthy probiotic population. Yet, it's been estimated that 97% of Americans have insufficient fiber in their diet.

If you've heard of fiber "pills", don't waste your money. They have been proven to not provide the type of fiber needed to properly feed your microbiome.

There's no substitute for the real thing found in real food. When it comes to water intake, unfortunately, most Americans are dehydrated, drinking sometimes as little as 1-2 glasses of water per day. What's needed is more like 8-10 glasses, totaling about 2.5 liters or over 80 ounces. It's something you'll likely need to build up to, but the need for adequate purified water to flush toxins and help nutrients move through your intestines is extremely vital.

#5 LIVER/GALL BLADDER

You've heard your liver is a detoxification organ, likely, but it's closest "neighbor", the gall bladder, is frequently not understood. The liver makes bile and your gall bladder stores it. Bile acts like a detergent, breaking down the fat you eat into small droplets. Therefore the gall bladder not only assists you to digest fat and absorb fat-soluble vitamins such as A,D,E and K, but it also acts to eliminate waste or toxins that are secreted into the bile.

We won't go into the other 500 plus functions of the liver but the aspect of both organs I wish to discuss here is that they "flush" and keep toxins moving out of your system.

The can "clog" and get backed up, causing poor drainage and increased likelihood of toxicity and malabsorption. The liver and gall bladder are an integral part of your digestive health but they're often ignored unless they are diseased. This is an error.

If the liver and/or gall bladder are not performing properly, even the best efforts of good nutrition, and all that we've discussed up to now, will be in vain. It's interesting that some of the oldest natural remedies in medicine are the best, even today, to "unclog" and regain the flow of nutrients and toxins through the liver and gall bladder.

Conclusion

→ The good news is that it's not difficult to naturally treat digestive problems. But one must appreciate the intricate interrelationship between the organs and how diet, lifestyle, drug use and more, can affect the system. The digestive tract is large and complex. You absolutely need to find a clinician with the depth of experience required to target the right areas to evaluate. Nothing works in a vacuum in your body and the digestive tract epitomizes this statement.

Evaluating for food sensitivities, low stomach acid, deficient pancreatic enzymes, infections and more, should all be part of a comprehensive, natural program designed to regain your ideal digestive health and full body health.

ARE YOU READY TO GET HEALTHY?

If you're tired of having digestive problems, I'd like to hear from you and offer you help.

Contact us for a Free Consultation - **Call (408) 733-0400.**

If you are not local to us you can still receive help; our Destination Clinic treats patients from across the country. We help the world's busiest people regain, retain and reclaim their health, energy and resilience and we'd be delighted to assist you. If you liked this E-book please share it with friends and family.

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