

Are you suffering from indigestion?

“Dear Lynda

I have noticed lately that I am getting heartburn after most meals particularly if I eat rich food. I am under a lot of stress at the moment could it be the stress causing the discomfort or have I got a real health problem. I have been told some herbs are beneficial for digestion, can you recommend any. Thank you.”

As I wrote recently stress is bad for health and is responsible for many modern day health problems. If we eat when we are stressed, anxious or tense we do not digest our food efficiently. Acid indigestion is often called heartburn because of the burning feeling it produces, this is caused by acid leaking upwards from the stomach into the oesophagus, or swallowing tube. The sensation of heartburn is usually experienced in the middle of the chest whereas acid indigestion is a similar burning discomfort but felt in the pit of the stomach. It can be caused by acid irritating the stomach lining or duodenum. It is thought to occur not only because of too much acid but because the mucus lining of the stomach has been weakened which may indicate you have an ulcer. If you are getting severe symptoms I recommend you see your doctor. Indigestion is a very common problem and if you start listening to your body you will know which foods trigger the pain and can eliminate them from your diet for while.

We are what we eat and I cannot emphasise enough the importance of diet for successful healing and health. Weak digestion can occur because of over consumption of refined carbohydrates or a weakening of digestive metabolism from age or the basic constitution of a person. Indigestion is more often than not caused by bad eating habits which include the following:

- Eating too quickly and not chewing your food enough
- Excess water taken with meals
- Excess use of raw foods
- Over eating
- Eating irregularly
- Eating when stressed
- Eating the wrong foods

We can support the digestive system easily by the way we cook our food and by using the appropriate kitchen spices. Lightly cooked food helps maintain the vitamins level within the diet and the addition of spices which are easily available from your spice shelf can be very beneficial. Most herbal spices are carminative; that is they prevent and cure flatulence. Others are stimulants and aids to digestion. The following will help improve indigestion and heartburn:

Basil (Ocimum Basilicum)

Sweet bay is carminative and used as a tea made of one ounce of basil leaves to a pint of water simmered for twenty minutes is helpful for indigestion.

Bay (Laurus Nobilis)

Bay leaves can be added to soups and beans and will prevent gas and indigestion.

Caraway (Carum Carvi)

Caraway is an excellent aid to digestion. It can be taken for indigestion, gas, and colic. An ounce of the crushed seeds should be steeped for twenty minutes in a pint of water to make an infusion. The tea can be taken in frequent doses of two tablespoons until you feel better.

Cloves (Syzygium Aromaticum)

Cloves are stimulating aromatic buds of the clove tree and are effective in warming the body; they improve digestion, treat flatulence, vomiting and nausea. Cloves can be added to stews. They are often added to other herbal formulas that require a stimulant.

Cumin (Cuminum Cyminum)

Cumin is a carminative and is one of the best spices to prevent and relieve gas. Use cumin when cooking curries, beans and fried foods.

Ginger (Zingiber Officinale)

Ginger is of great benefit to the stomach, intestines and circulation. Ginger tea can be made by grating one ounce of fresh ginger and simmering for ten minutes in one pint of water.

Nutmeg (Myristica Fragrans)

Nutmeg added sparingly to milk and baked fruits and desserts is an aid to digestion.

Rosemary (Rosmarinus Officinalis)

Rosemary is a stimulant and is useful for indigestion, colic, nausea and gas. A tea can be made by adding half an ounce of rosemary to a pint of boiled water and steeping for ten minutes in a covered vessel.

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