

## TAKE THE HCL CHALLENGE

This simple test can help you determine whether you have the appropriate level of hydrochloric acid in your stomach for optimal digestion. You should not complete this test, however, if you have ulcers or are currently taking antacid medications. In the case of the latter, you can try introducing a digestive enzyme supplement containing HCL since it includes a lower dosage of hydrochloric acid (such as Ultrazyme from Douglas Labs).

### Instructions:

Begin by taking 1 capsule of betaine hydrochloride (BH) before your largest meal of the day. You should feel a burning or warming sensation in your stomach or upper abdomen. You may also feel slightly “acidic,” or as though you have indigestion. Any reaction of this nature indicates you should stop taking the pills and that your stomach acid is sufficient. The test is now complete and I recommend repeating it yearly since stomach acid levels tend to decrease with aging as well as stress.

If no reaction is felt after taking the BH, repeat the process the following day with 2 pills before your largest meal. If you still do not feel anything, continue to increase by one pill per day until you feel any change in your digestive system or you reach the maximum of 14 pills. Remember, you should feel something after one or two pills - this is normal. Taking more without feeling any response is a definite indication your stomach acid level is low.

Once you reach the point at which you feel the warming or burning sensation it’s important to not cease taking the HCL capsules. In fact, you have just uncovered your level of deficiency. Simply take one less pill the next day and remain at this number of pills daily until the warming sensation returns. Continue to decrease in this manner by one pill each time you feel the warming sensation. This weaning down process restores your stomach acid levels.

**To recap:** you will *increase* steadily by one pill daily until you reach the burning/warming point and *slowly wean yourself off* the pills by decreasing your dosage by one pill each time the sensation returns.

Be patient and stick with it. This process will ensure you have just the right amount of stomach acid – not too much and not too little –for excellent nutrient absorption, one of the key secrets to looking and feeling your best every day.

You may choose to continue supplementing at each meal (3 times a day) with a digestive enzyme that contains HCL along with enzymes. Choices include: UltraZyme (Douglas Labs); Metagest (Metagenics); Digest (Genestra).