

# Stomach Acid and Enzymes Guidelines



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**Important notice: This information is only for patients of Michael Cheikin MD. Risk of serious injury if utilized without proper ongoing medical supervision.**

## Why Do I Need Stomach Acid and Enzymes?

In order to properly digest foods, we need a low pH and acidic enzymes in our stomach and an alkaline pH and enzymes in our small intestines. With chronic stress, antibiotic use (even in the distant past), certain deficiencies and other conditions, the body's mechanisms to produce acid and enzymes can slow down. This can lead to improper digestion, especially of proteins. Detection of undigested proteins in the small intestines can lead to a whole host of gastro-intestinal (GERD, diarrhea, constipation, IBS, colitis, etc) and other conditions (such as allergy, emotional disorders, insomnia, hormonal disorders, yeast syndrome, etc.)

It is not possible to accurately measure acid and enzyme levels; therefore a trial of these agents is not only potentially therapeutic, they are also diagnostic. If your digestion, symptoms, or other measures (such as pulse) improve while on these agents, it is reasonable to conclude that there is indeed a deficiency of these agents in your body.

There are several nutraceuticals (nutritional therapeutic products) that can work together as "digestive aides". The more you understand their purpose and use, the better and quicker outcome you will achieve.

## What Products Will I Receive?

**The response to anything ingested, including pharmaceuticals and water, is unpredictable in any individual. Even identical twins can have opposite response to any agent. For this reason, we give test doses of several products of different formulations and from different companies for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.**

**Panzyne** is a combination of mild acid plus animal-based enzymes, the same ones humans make. It is helpful to think of Panzyne as "priming the pump". If properly used, and in

combination with other strategies, over time you should need less. The acid in Panzyne is very mild and has even been used for small children with success. In fact, it is so mild that some patients need a stronger product.

**Metagest** is similar but a bit stronger than Panzyne on a pill-by-pill basis.

**Betaine** is a third option that is also free of animal products.

**Enzymes** such as Vitalzymes or Digestive Enzymes Ultra are combinations of several enzymes that are deficient in most of our guts. For example, beans and broccoli have a specific sugar that is hard for us to break down and absorb. When this sugar feeds the bacteria and yeast in the colon, gas is produced. The required enzyme is sold as Beano. Many of our enzymes contain this enzyme as well several other enzymes at a lower cost. They work synergistically with the acid product to allow for an improved digestion and absorption. Some are more specialized for fats (lipases), proteins (proteases), starches and specific compounds such as gluten and casein (milk protein).

## How Do I Figure Out How Much of Each To Take?

Taking these agents is different than other medications or supplements because the amounts vary. Factors include: 1) quantity of food, 2) quantity of liquids, 3) type of food, 4) combinations with other foods, 5) time of day, and 6) other medications and conditions. Because all digestion, even of supplements, requires some acid and enzyme should be taken with each meal.

**You should start with one of each, with each meal of over 150-200 calories. You should always take your supplements with a meal of over 300 calories and utilize the acid and enzymes to facilitate digestion.**

**After trialing one of each, slowly increase the number of each for the same volume and complexity of meal until you notice your digestion is better or you have a consistent burning feeling. Burning means that you have taken too much acid, and you should then**

**reduce by one pill for the same size and complexity of meal. Some people never achieve this end point. This will be individualized in office visits. Knowing the dose that produces burning is very important—taking too little acid/enzyme out of fear will waste time and other valuable resources.**

**The amount of each does not have to be equal and will vary from meal to meal.** Adults can initially build to 5 Panzymes, 7 Metagest or Betaine, and 4 Enzymes with each meal.

### **How Do I Know If The Digestive Aides Are Working?**

Depending upon your symptoms, it may be easy or hard to tell if the acid and enzymes are working. If you have a history of bloating, burping, excess gas, diarrhea, constipation or other upper or lower GI symptoms, then you should notice a change. If you have no clear symptoms and these agents have been recommended because of other evidence of malabsorption/maldigestion, you may not notice a change in digestion per say, but other changes may occur in your sleep, skin, mood, etc. Blood tests to monitor levels will be repeated every 2-4 months and may be the only evidence that these agents are working.

### **What If I Have Difficulties With These Agents?**

As with all agents, individual responses vary. The general guideline with any new supplement is to go slow. If you have a difficulty, try each agent separately and try to identify a clear pattern. For example, too much or too little of any digestive aid with the wrong food may cause burning, bloating, gas, other new symptoms or worsening of existing symptoms. A follow-up visit is important a few weeks after beginning these agents to monitor your response. Between visits a phone call can usually address an unexpected or untoward response. Occasionally other agents are needed in addition to acid/enzymes or before they are started (i.e. severe leaky gut syndrome). This will be addressed in your regular visits.

### **What Do I Do With My (Stomach Acid) Medications?**

Do not change any conventional medications unless specifically directed to do so. Your body has become accustomed to them, and to abruptly stop them may cause a "rebound" over-reaction. It works best to let the digestive aids work for a while and then to wean specific medications under direct supervision.

### **Where Can I Learn More?**

Begin with the free articles on [www.cheikin.com](http://www.cheikin.com), including "Stomach Acid", "Leaky Gut Syndrome", and "Allergy". Please also review the related videos such as "GI Strategies" and "Stomach Acid".

