Highly Effective Treatments for Pain and Fatigue
by Jacob Teitelbaum, MD

The Importance of Nutrition in Fatigue and Pain
Part 4 — Enzymes and How to Get Off Prescription Antacids Naturally!

The last 3 columns have focused on the importance of specific nutrients in chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia. Good digestive health, however, is the foundation of good nutrition. Because indigestion is epidemic in Western societies, this month’s column will focus on getting people off their antacids and improving enzyme function. Because these problems are so common, I’ve chosen to write the column in the form of two information sheets that you can give your patients. If you e-mail me (endfatigue@aol.com) I can e-mail the information sheets to you so you can print them out on your letterhead for your patients. In later columns I will speak about leaky gut and spastic colon, two processes that usually are caused by bowel infections — especially fungal and parasitic.

Eliminating Chronic Acid Reflux and Indigestion
Do you think your problem is too much stomach acid?
If you still think your problem is too much acid, keep this in mind. The older people get the more likely they are to use antacids. This is interesting as stomach acid production decreases dramatically as people get older!
We seem to forget that having stomach acid is both necessary and normal. In fact, the body has gone to great lengths to be able to produce stomach acid without digesting the stomach itself! Your body needs to have proper nutrition, however, to make the mucous lining that protects the stomach. Instead of giving your body what it needs to heal, we sometimes make the mistake of turning off our stomach acid to solve the problem.
Most of your indigestion symptoms occur when any stomach acid refluxes (squirts) back up into the food pipe (the esophagus). Your food pipe is not made to resist stomach acid and even a little bit will cause it to burn. Because of this we give medications that turn off all the stomach acid. Because there is no stomach acid, the burning stops and we get deluded into thinking the problem was too much stomach acid.

What Happens When You Turn Off Stomach Acid?
Unfortunately, using anti-acid medications for an extended period causes 2 problems. Firstly, with no stomach acid, your body is not able to optimally digest food and you become nutritionally deficient. This makes it even harder for your stomach to make the mucous lining it needs to protect itself and can set you up for even more reflux. Secondly, in your body’s attempt to make stomach acid (when you take anti-acid meds), it makes huge amounts of a hormone called Gastrin that stimulates stomach acid. Because of this, as soon as you stop your antacids, the stomach makes massive amounts of acid — which it cannot protect against. In essence, you become addicted to the antacids. It is no surprise that Prilosec, Nexium, Zantac and other antacids are some of the biggest money making pharmaceuticals!

So What Can I Do?
A wonderfully effective way to resolve your reflux and indigestion is the following (in mild or occasional cases, the DGL licorice for a few days may be all you need. For more severe cases, use the entire program below to restore healthy digestion).
1. Improve your digestion by taking the proper enzymes (see below and the “Enzymes and digestive health” info sheet) and drink sips of warm liquids instead of cold while eating (cold temperatures inhibit digestive enzyme function). Long-term use of digestive enzymes can also dramatically improve your over-all health and well being.
2. Avoid coffee, aspirin products, colas, and alcohol until your stomach heals and then use them in limited amounts.
3. Take measures to heal your stomach lining. Using DGL licorice (must be the DGL form as others can cause blood pressure problems — see below) can be powerfully effective in resolving your symptoms. Research shows that it is as effective as tagamet, but is healthy for you! Mastic gum 500 mg capsules two capsules twice a day for two months is also highly effective. Both of these can be used separately or together. As they help to heal the stomach instead of just masking symptoms, they may take 3-4 weeks to work in severe cases. You can use your antacids during that time if you want.
4. In many patients, stomach infections (H. Pylori) can be a major cause of long-term indigestion. Most doctors treat this with Prilosec combined with 2-3 antibiotics used simultaneously. A better approach is to add Limonene (Heartburn Free by PhytoPharmica) 1 every other day for 20 days once your indigestion has settled down a bit with the licorice/mastic gum. It may initially aggravate reflux symptoms, but, by killing the infection, may give long-term relief after only one 10 capsule course.

How Can I Give Up My Prescription Antacids?
After you have been on this treatment regimen for 1-2 months and are feeling much better, ask your doctor if you can stop your prescription antacids and switch to Tagamet (or stay on the DGL licorice/mastic gum). This will decrease
your stomach acid instead of totally turning it off. By doing this, your body can slowly ease back to normal production of acid. Decrease the dose of Tagamet or DGL licorice until you are able to stop. After two months, most people can stop the licorice/mastic gum. They can be used as long as you want, however. If symptoms recur down the line, simply use the DGL licorice for a few days. If needed, you can repeat the course of DGL licorice/mastic gum (and even the heartburn Free if the stomach infection recurs) whenever you like. Meanwhile, you'll have broken your addiction to antacids and allowed your body to make the stomach acid it needs for proper digestion.

To Summarize:(Use 1, 2 and 4. May add 3 & 5 as needed)

1. Similase(by Tyler) or Complete GEST Enzymes (Enzymatic Therapy) – 2 capsules with each meal to help digest your food properly and drink warm liquids with meals. If the enzymes are irritating to the stomach, wait till your stomach feels better on #2 & 3 before resuming the enzymes.

2. DGL Licorice – 380mg (not the sugar free one) from Enzymatic Therapy or Rhizinate from PhytoPharmica. Chew 2 tablets 20 minutes before meals.

3. Mastic Gum (any brand) – 1000mg twice a day for 2 months – then as needed.

4. Heartburn Free – (Enzymatic Therapy). 1 every other day for 20 days (may initially aggravate reflux, but can give long term relief.

5. Saventaro Cat's Claw – (Enzymatic Therapy-use this form, as others are a mix of 2 compounds that cancel each other out) – 1 twice a day can also help.

Enzymes and Digestive Health

Unfortunately, medical school does not prepare physicians with much information on proper nutrition or digestive health. Yet, how can your body stay healthy if it can't get the nutrition out of food that it needs? Enzyme deficiencies can contribute to:

- Indigestion, gas, bloating, diarrhea, and constipation
- Arthritis and inflammatory disorders
- Fatigue and muscle aches
- Brain fog/dementia
- Heart attacks
- and many other conditions. Proper nutrition is important for all your body’s functions. The ability to properly digest your food is critical for proper nutrition and to avoid getting toxic.

Why are Enzymes Important?

In medical school, I was taught that the pancreas and salivary glands made all the enzymes you needed to digest your food. If there was a problem with the pancreas, we could always give digestive enzyme tablets made from an animal pancreas to take care of the problem. This information seems to be woefully deficient.

What goes on in real life is that most of the enzymes we need to digest the food we eat are naturally present in the food. This occurs because enzymes are what a fruit or vegetable uses to ripen. As the ripening process continues, the food digests to where we consider it to be rotten. From the perspective of an apple or grain, for example, this is a perfect stage for the seed to use its food source so it can grow into an adult plant. These same plant enzymes also work in the acid environment of your stomach (where approximately 40% of digestion can take place) while animal enzymes can't work until after they get past the stomach.

Many decades ago, food processors realized that they could prolong the shelf life of food from days to years by destroying the enzymes present in the food. They also discovered that using salicylates (the active component of aspirin) is a very effective way to destroy enzymes. Because of this, most of the enzymes present in processed foods have been eliminated over the last 30 plus years. This corresponds to the period of time in which we have seen a dramatic increase in degenerative diseases and indigestion. Meanwhile, your poor pancreas has had to pick up the slack and make almost all the enzymes needed for digestion. Many people realized however that if they juiced or ate a raw food diet (cooking can also destroy enzymes) they felt dramatically better. Food processors are learning new tricks though. By gassing fresh fruits and vegetables, they can destroy the enzymes present even in these fresh foods. This way they can look appealing on the grocery shelf for weeks instead of developing those little brown spots that we don't like to see. Unfortunately, although the food looks good, it has lost much of its nutritional value.

What Happens When I Don't Have Enough Enzymes?

When you don't have enough enzymes to adequately digest your food, several things happen:

1. You become deficient in proteins, carbohydrates, and/or fats depending on which enzymes you are missing
2. You then crave the missing nutrient
3. By eating excessive amounts of the nutrient you can't digest, it can build up in your colon and become toxic.
4. You absorb large chunks of proteins (instead of breaking them down to their component amino acids). Your immune system then has to treat them as outside invaders and use up its energy digesting those foods that make it into your bloodstream. This can exhaust your immune system while contributing to food sensitivities. If you check you may find that your temperature goes up around 40 minutes after eating as your immune system has to make up for a weak digestive system
5. Your body works poorly because of the nutritional deficiencies. You feel poorly and have digestive disturbances.

All in all, you feel lousy, the stomach hurts, and you may have specific food cravings. Sound familiar?

Does It Matter Which Enzymes I Use?

As noted above, it is critical that the enzymes be from plant sources, as animal enzymes do not work in the acid environment of the stomach. They can also easily be destroyed in processing, so quality is critical. I recommend Similase by Tyler or CompleteGest by Enzymatic Therapy, as these companies are known for high quality nutriceuticals. I would take 2 with each meal.

Jacob Teitelbaum MD is director of the Annapolis Research Center for Effective CFS/Fibromyalgia Therapies (410-573-5389; www.EndFatigue.com) and author of the best selling book From Fatigued to Fantastic! His newest book Three Steps To Happiness! Healing Through Joy has just been released. He accepts no money from any company whose products he recommends and 100% of his royalty for products he makes is donated to charity.