

remediesTM for LIFE

SUPPLEMENT SPOTLIGHT



Vegetarian-Friendly

Prefer plant-based enzymes? Aside from supporting digestion, some of the digestive enzymes from plant sources, such as bromelain, may ease the impact of excessive inflammation in the body. Pregnant women may find that the gentle digestive support of papain, from papaya, or ginger relieves nausea.

why enzymes? Digestion support

Most of us have experienced indigestion. The awful bloated feeling may arrive after a particularly large meal, say during the holiday season. Some people may experience fatigue regularly after eating—even when the meal is a normal size. Others have gas, nausea, or painful cramps. Since strong digestion is fundamental for well-being and longevity, it's a mistake to ignore signs of indigestion.

» A Delicate System

Effective digestion requires special proteins called digestive enzymes. We produce these enzymes when we eat. Amylase, which breaks down starches, is part of saliva and also is produced by the pancreas. The stomach makes hydrochloric acid (HCL) and pepsin, which break apart proteins. In the intestines, enzymes from the pancreas turn starches into

sugars and further break apart proteins and fats. More enzymes in the lining of the small intestine aid in the absorption of nutrients, amino acids, and fatty acids from our foods and help to move them through the bloodstream to the liver and to other organs and tissues. It's an elegant system—when it's working.

Unfortunately, as our digestive enzymes begin to weaken with age both in quantity and in strength, we may begin to feel chronic symptoms of indigestion. Poor digestion compromises our health, nutritionally speaking. The ability to convert the foods we eat into the nutrients we need to support our organs and physical processes diminishes as we grow older.

Frequent symptoms of weak digestion may simply be your digestive system's cry for help. Thankfully, the enzymes we may be lacking as we age are available in supplement form. Supplements will be even more effective if you pay attention to some sound eating habits, such as chewing your food thoroughly, relaxing before and during meals, and not overeating.

» Stomach Support and More

Indigestion is sometimes a sign of insufficient production of stomach acid. Symptoms of this condition, called hypochlorhydria, include heartburn and bloating. In this case, consider taking supplemental HCL (often found as betaine HCL, a combination of beet-derived betaine and HCL) plus pepsin, which may help support digestion. Hypochlorhydria

can be confirmed by your healthcare practitioner, who should monitor use of betaine HCL. Betaine HCL is best taken mid-meal. Since HCL pepsin supplements work by changing the pH of the stomach, they are not recommended for anyone with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) or active ulcers.

Individuals with suspected or confirmed weak pancreatic function (signs include bloating, flatulence, and fatty or oily stools) or those who suffer from indigestion after high-fat meals may benefit from pancreatin (supplemental pancreatic enzymes). Pancreatin provides the three major families of enzymes: proteolytic, amylase, and lipase. Other combination enzyme products help boost digestion in both the stomach and the intestines. They include ingredients such as amylase, bromelain, lipase, cellulase, ginger, lactase, maltase, papain, protease, and phytase. Your healthcare practitioner or the knowledgeable staff at the store that gives you *remedies* can help you choose a product that meets your needs.

Even if symptoms have troubled you for years, you never have to surrender to chronic indigestion. Healthy eating habits, along with the right supplements, can help. Enzymes may be your key to turning weak digestion into naturally vibrant health.

—Jolie Root

Enzymes: What the Experts Know by Tom Bohager (\$14.95, One World Press, 2006) • *Why Stomach Acid Is Good for You* by Jonathan V. Wright, MD, and Lane Leonard, PhD (\$15.95, M. Evans and Company Inc., 2001)