

The Digestive System Herbal Hour

By:



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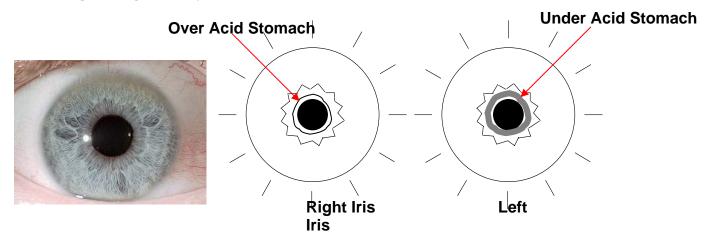
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The Digestive System

The digestive system breaks down the food we eat, extracting nutrients and assimilating them for use throughout the body. Proper digestive-system function is essential to maintaining good health and energy levels. The body requires nutrients from all three food categories (proteins, carbohydrates and fats) to survive.

Digestive concerns are common to Americans. These include indigestion, heartburn, acid reflux, insufficient enzymes, stomach ulcers and stomach cramps.

Examining the Digestive System



After food is chewed and swallowed, it passes through the esophagus and enters the stomach. The stomach secretes hydrochloric acid and certain enzymes to begin the breakdown and sterilization of the food. The stomach is particularly important to the digestion of proteins. Typically, the stomach will hold about a quart of food or liquid, but its muscular walls can expand to hold much more than this.

The stomach is lined with a durable mucous coating that protects it from hydrochloric acid and other gastric juices. Ulcers form when a portion of this mucous lining wears thin, and the digestive juices aggravate the stomach.

The bulk of nutrient assimilation takes place in the small intestine. The circulatory system carries nutrients from the small intestine to the cells of the body. The small intestine is lined with tiny fingerlike projections called villi and tinier cytoplasmic projections called microvilli. These villi increase the surface area of the intestine and allow for more efficient nutrient absorption. The average adult's small intestine is 10-13 feet long, and about one inch in diameter. Because of the villi and microvilli, the total surface area of the small intestine is about 180 square meters – just smaller than a tennis court.

The first 10 inches of the small intestine is known as the duodenum; it is the most important section in digestion. Here, enzyme secretions from the pancreas and bile secretions from the liver mix with the food and break down carbohydrates, proteins and fats into smaller units. The body can assimilate these nutrients in smaller forms and use them for energy. The duodenum also secretes lactase to digest milk products, and sucrase and maltase to break down sugars.

The next sections of the small intestine are the jejunum and the ileum. In this combined 9-12 foot segment, an additional 2-3 liters of intestinal juices are secreted each day. Because food particles have to be a certain size before they can be absorbed into the bloodstream, digestion and assimilation in this section can take several hours. The villi and microvilli absorb tiny nutrients that travel through the lymph vessels or into capillaries for transport to the liver. After the liver filters and processes these nutrients, they are sent throughout the body.

The pancreas is an important part of the digestive process, producing approximately three pints of digestive juices each day. These juices pass through the pancreatic duct into the small intestine. This organ also controls the amount of sugar in the blood by secreting two hormones, glucagon and insulin. Insulin and glucagon work as a check-and-balance system, regulating the body's blood sugar level.

The liver is also critical to digestion. It is located in the right side of the upper abdomen, under the diaphragm. This is the largest internal organ in the body, weighing about 3-4 pounds. The liver is composed of groups of cells called lobules. Anywhere from 50,000 – 100,000 lubules make up the liver, and each lobule has a central vein that drains blood into the hepatic veins, which eventually carry it to the heart. The liver produces bile, which breaks down, or emulsifies, fats. Bile drains from the liver lobules into the branches of the bile ducts that lead to the gallbladder, where it is stored.

All told, the liver performs more than 500 functions, many of them of a processing or storage nature. The liver processes potential poisons for removal from the body, including alcohol and drugs. It also breaks down old red blood cells and reprocesses body substances, extracting iron from hemoglobin, and reusing amino acids.

The liver stores carbohydrates as glycogen, which can be quickly converted into glucose (for energy) if needed by the brain, muscles or other organs. It also stores certain nutrients like vitamins (A, B-complex, B_{12} , D, E and K), releasing them into the blood when the body needs them. These reserves can last several months. The proteins albumen, globulin and fibrinogen – all components of blood plasma – are also manufactured in the liver.

Heptatitis C – Use Milk Thistle and cleanse the body.

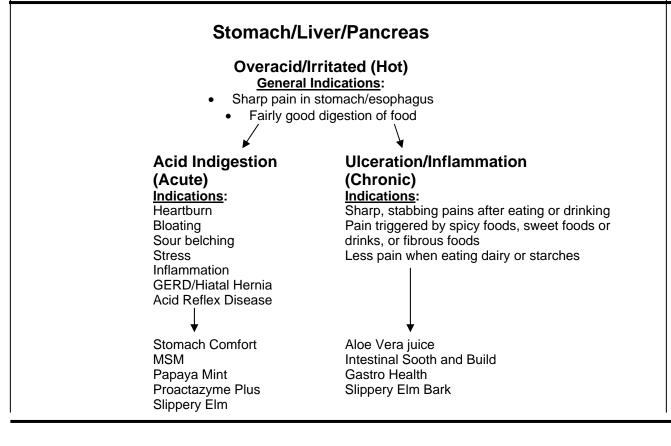
Digestive System Analysis

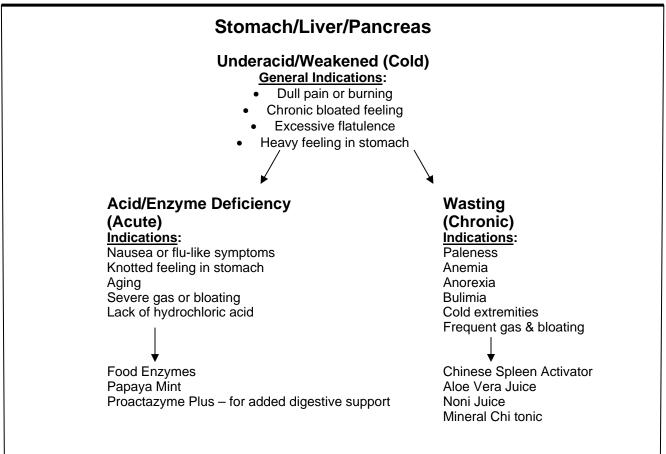
If you have four or more of the following indications, you may consider nutritional aid to the digestive system:

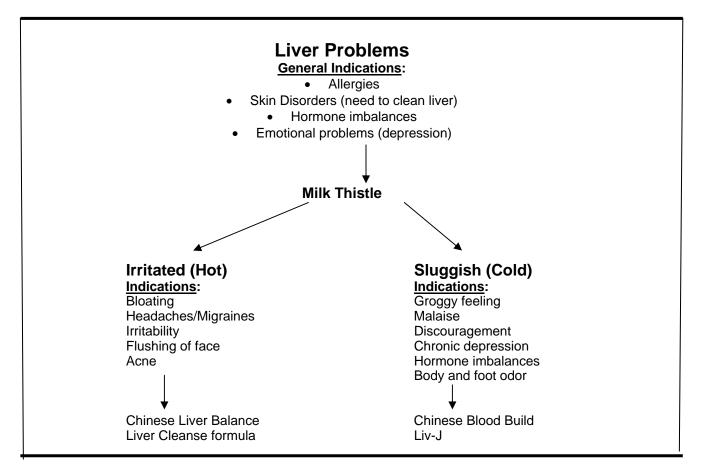
- Lack of energy
- Body odor and/or bad breath
- Difficulty digesting certain foods
- Food allergies
- Poor resistance to disease
- Belching or gas after meals
- Skin/complexion problems
- Lack of a balanced diet
- Less than two bowel movements per day
- Lack of appetite
- Brittle or easily broken fingernails
- Dry, damaged or dull hair
- High-fat diet
- Food/chemical sensitivities
- Recurrent yeast/fungal infections
- Weak bones, teeth or cartilage
- Suffer from anxiety or worry.

Digestive System Suggestions

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and soft drinks
- Eat raw fruits and vegetables rich in enzymes
- Avoid overeating
- Eat no later than 2-3 hours before bedtime,
- Avoid resting after meals.







Product Overview:

<u>Stomach Comfort</u> This supplement contains calcium carbonate to neutralize stomach acid, it also contains alginic acid from brown kelp, guar gum and slippery elm to protect and soothe the esophagus and stomach lining from irritation, licorice, papaya and ginger root are added to help promote good digestion. Chew 2 tablets after a meal if heartburn is present. This product should be sued short term to help lessen symptoms while you work on the underlying causes and solutions to the excess acid production.

<u>MSM</u> - This naturally occurring source of organic sulfur has been shown to help correct symptoms of hyperacidity, GERD, and heartburn. MSM balances the production of stomach acid back to normal levels and also helps in repairing the lining of the stomach. Studies have shown that people prefer MSM for controlling hyperacidity over the use of antacids.

Papaya mints – a chewable digestive enzyme. Papaya helps to digest all food groups including dairy. This is a good enzyme for children. It tastes good and refreshes your breath after eating. It contains peppermint oil which helps to break up gas and relax spasms that develop in the stomach. Papaya has a natural anti-inflammatory property which can be helpful for a inflamed digestive tract. Over use can be too stimulating so keep to the dose on the bottle label.

<u>Proactazyme Plus</u> is a wide spectrum digestive enzyme from plant sources, which does not contain any hydrochloric acid, so it will not cause burning. It helps to digest carbohydrates, proteins, fats, sugars and plant fibers like those in beans and lentils.

<u>Slippery Elm</u> This herb is wonderful for rebuilding the mucus lining of the stomach, intestinal tract, lungs, throat and sinus. And at the same time the herb soothes and coats the irritated mucus lining and protects it from the hydrochloric acid secretion. It is best taken 20 minutes before a meal.

<u>Gastro Health</u> This formula will soothe an irritated stomach lining and promote healing. The herbs in the formula includes deglycyrrhizinated licorice root (DGL) which has been shown in studies to be more effective in the treatment of ulcers than Tagament or Zantac. This is partially because DGL helps the cells to quickly heal and regenerate the stomach lining and promote normal functioning as well. Other herbs such as Inula Racemosa, Pau D' Arco, and clove are effective against the H. pylori bacteria, and yeast which are often present when the stomach lining has been irritated for a while. Capsicum and cloves where added to promote circulation in the stomach area.

Intestinal Soothe and Build This wonderful formula contains herbs which help to soothe and heal the stomach and intestinal lining. The herbs help to reduce inflammation and enhance the elimination of toxins and irritants from the intestinal tract. They also relax nervousness in the muscles which can lead to spasms in the bowel.

Food Enzymes This is a full spectrum enzyme that helps to digest proteins, carbohydrates and fats in the stomach. It contains hydrochloric acid (HCL) to help with protein digestion and destroy yeast and parasites. This enzyme is best for people over age 30 (because HCL output decreases with age), and have symptoms of poor digestion on a somewhat regular basis. These people usually have low hydrochloric acid output, the most common symptoms being: **bloating, belching, or gas immediately after a meal, a sense of fullness or fatigue after a meal, undigested food in the stools, mild indigestion, constipation or diarrhea on a regular basis. Start with 1-2 enzymes per meal, if your symptoms are not aggravated, or they improve, try 2-3 with larger meals, some people require 3-4 enzymes with their largest meal. If you have taken too many, you will feel a warm feeling in your stomach, simply cut back on the dose with the next meal. Eventually, your own output of HCL will improve and you should be able to cut back on the amount needed. If taking food enzymes increases a feeling of burning or indigestion in the stomach then you may have an irritated mucus lining in the stomach.**

<u>Noni Juice</u> – is a wonderful tonic for the whole body, it is particularly good for those with joint, immune, or digestive weakness. Noni juice has been a stable food source in Polynesia for centuries. Many are familiar with the fruits ability to boost endurance and stamina. Because it is considered a tonic it is especially recommended for debilitated conditions. A great formula for the immune system Noni has been proven to effectively control or kill over six types of infectious bacteria including Escherichia coli, salmonella typhi (and other types) shigella paradysenteriae, and staphyloccus. Noni also contains several anti-tumor properties. When combined with standard chemo-therapy agents, Noni improved the survival time in mice with cancer. Noni has also been shown to inhibit cell proliferation (Tumor growth).

For those of you who have digestive concerns, Noni is an excellent formula for improving digestion. The compounds in Noni appear to have the ability to increase the absorption, assimilation and utilization of Vitamins and Minerals. The presence of proxeronine in Noni initiates a rise in xeronine in the intestinal tract which enables the walls of the intestines to more efficiently absorb various nutrients, especially amino acids.

Also if Structural weakness is a concern then Noni can be helpful here too. Numerous studies have shown that Noni has been useful in reducing the joint pain associated with Arthritic disease. One link to arthritic pain may be the inability to properly digest proteins which can then form crystal-like deposits in the joints.

<u>Aloe Vera</u> is a very nutritious food which contains about 200 nutritional substances. Being that it helps improve digestion and is easy to absorb, it is a good choice to build up a weakened person who suffered from poor digestion. It has an acidic pH which helps to encourage the body to secrete proper amounts of hydrochloric acid to improve digestion and absorption. It helps to soothe and heal the digestive system.

Digestive Bitters is a liquid herbal blend that promotes the release of digestive juices and enzymes including hydrochloric acid. The bitter herbs in this formula stimulate the release of bile from the liver to promote digestion, and help to move congestion in the digestive system. For those who are vegetarians and do not wish to take a HCL containing enzyme, this is a good choice.

<u>Anti-Gas</u> formula contains papaya fruit to provide a natural plant enzyme, ginger to stimulate the production of digestive juices and enzymes, peppermint to break up gas and fennel, lobelia, wild yam and dong quai for their anti-spasmodic and anti-inflammatory properties. This is a good formula for those who suffer from irritable bowel or painful gas spasms in the digestive tract.

<u>Chinese Mineral Chi Tonic</u> is a formula that was designed to help the body to respond more efficiently to stress. It is a tonic formula that builds, strengthens and nourishes the body. The formula is in a base of 66 naturally occurring minerals in their colloidal form which makes them very easy to absorb. Because a common effect of high stress is digestive disturbances, this formula contains deglycyrrhizinated licorice root which stimulates the production of the cells that form the protective mucus membrane of the intestinal tract, and ginger to stimulate good digestion.

<u>Chinese Spleen Activator</u> is for a weakened digestion when a person is not assimilating nutrients well. The way to recognize this is that people tend to be pale, often thin, can't gain weight no matter what they do. Tall and skinny with no real muscle mass on their body. In Chinese medicine they call this spleen deficiency. This is where the body doesn't have the ability to transform the food you eat into muscle tissue. This type of person will be low in hydrochloric acid and would benefit by adding Food Enzymes to their program as well. Chinese Spleen Activator activates the energy of the digestive system and helps to build it up. This formula is beneficial for older people who are beginning to waste and loosing muscle mass and loosing body weight because they are no longer processing or digesting food very well. Also People who are overweight and have a high percentage of body fat but a low percentage of muscle.

<u>Chinese Liver Balance</u> is for a stressed liver condition. It is a cleansing formula – designed to stimulate the liver to detoxify to get rid of metabolic poisons because the liver is prone to becoming congested. Liver Balance formula is for when the liver is irritated or needs to be stimulated to cleanse or detoxify. Excess exposure to toxins, poor digestion of food, and being constantly under stress will all overload and congest the liver. Emotions of anger, resentment, irritability and an inability to forgive are associated with a stressed liver condition. This formula helps to balance these emotions. <u>Liver Cleanse formula</u> is a similar formula made from traditional western herbs it also cleanses a stressed liver but does not carry as much action on the emotions as the Chinese blend does.

<u>Chinese Blood Build</u> is for the weakened condition of the liver. It helps rebuild, replenish, and nourish the blood by improving liver function. The formula contains naturally occurring iron as people with weakened liver tend to be somewhat anemic. When taking a pulse the pulse in the vessels does not feel very wide (don't feel a lot of blood in their pulse). This formula is indicated a lot for people who are loosing a lot of blood through heavy menstruation. The emotions of discouragement, despair and depression are associated with liver weakness, as well as hypochondriac feelings. This formula helps to lift the moods and balance these emotions. <u>Liv-J formula</u> is a similar formula made from traditional western herbs it is a liver tonic formula which builds and strengthens the function of the liver, it is helpful for depression but does not carry quite as dramatic an action on the emotions as the Chinese blend does.

Hiatal Hernia – An Overlooked Cause of Disease

About three years ago Jack Ritchason, a naturopathic physician, corrected a health problem Steven Horne must have carried since childhood--a hiatal hernia. The impact this simple maneuver has had on his health has amazed him. He immediately noticed a difference in his lung capacity and his digestion and in the months that followed he began to put some muscle on his skin and bones frame and gain newfound strength and stamina.

Dr. Ritchason tells us that this is a common health problem and our own observations as well as those of others confirm this fact. But this is more than a personal observation as the American Digestive Disease Society has estimated that nearly half of all adults--some 60 million people--have a hiatal hernia. It occurs more often in women than in men. It affects people of all ages; but is most prevalent in people over 50 and highly likely in people over 65.

The Great Mimic

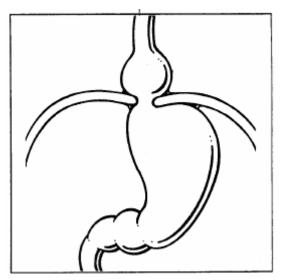
Hiatal Hernia has been called the "great mimic" because it mimics many disorders. A person with this problem can get such severe pains in their chest that they think they are having a heart attack. They may think they have an over acid stomach because they will regurgitate stomach acid after they eat, or their stomach may hurt so badly they will think they have an ulcer. This is just a sampling of the symptoms that may occur from this disorder.

What is a Hiatal Hernia?

When you swallow, your food passes down a long tube known as the esophagus into the stomach. This tube must pass through a muscle known as the diaphragm, which is located near the bottom of your rib cage. This opening in the diaphragm, which permits the esophagus to pass through, is regulated by a sphincter muscle (or "valve"), which relaxes and opens when we swallow to permit the food to pass through the diaphragm and into the stomach. This sphincter then closes to prevent stomach acid from coming back up into the throat. A hiatal hernia occurs when the top of the stomach rolls or slides up into this opening and becomes stuck there.

Symptoms

Naturally, when part of the stomach is forced into this opening, the sphincter cannot close properly. Thus, stomach acid may travel back up into the esophagus causing burning sensations (heartburn), esophageal spasms, inflammations and ulcers.



The cramped position of the stomach can also stress the Vegas nerve, which stimulates the release of hydrochloric acid. This can cause both over and under secretion of hydrochloric acid and stomach enzymes. It may also affect the sphincter or valve at the bottom of the stomach so that digestive secretions "leak" out of the stomach and are lost before they have completed their job.

The hiatal hernia will also interfere with the movement of the diaphragm muscle. This muscle normally pulls downward to expand the chest capacity and inflate the lungs. Since the hiatal hernia interferes with this movement, the person may be restricted to shallow breathing, or will resort to using the chest and shoulders to expand the lung capacity and take a deep breath.

The esophagus may also "kink" in the throat, which will irritate the thyroid gland and may cause some difficulty in

swallowing. Often persons with hiatal hernias will have difficulty in swallowing capsules or tablets as they get the sensation that they are "sticking" in their throat.

The irritation on the vagus nerve can cause reflex irritations throughout the body. The vagus nerve comes from the medulla and goes to the heart, esophagus, lungs, stomach, small intestines, liver, gall bladder, pancreas and colon. It also has links to the kidney, bladder, and external genitalia. Thus, a hiatal hernia may start imbalances in the system such as decreased stomach acid and ph imbalance in the intestines and elsewhere.

If a person develops poor stomach digestion due to a lack of hydrochloric acid; they will have difficulty digesting and assimilating protein and most minerals. It will also contribute to food putrefaction in the intestines, causing greater toxicity in the body. This lack of nutrition and toxic condition may contribute towards food allergies, constipation, anemia and immune and glandular system weaknesses.

Two other problems that a hiatal hernia may contribute to are asthma and heart disease. Since the hernia reduces the lung capacity by interfering with natural breathing, it could be a factor in asthma. The hernia may also put pressure on the heart. Gas in the intestines may put pressure on the hernia and push it against the bottom of the heart, which may be one way, in which a heart attack can be triggered. None of this spells immediate fatality, but it does point to a major contributing factor in degenerative illness.

Causes

The causes of a hiatal hernia are speculative and unique to each individual. However, there are a number causes. First of all there may be a mechanical cause. Improper lifting, hard coughing bouts heavy lifting, sharp blows to the abdomen (the kind that "knock the wind out of you"), tight clothing and poor posture may contribute to the development of this problem. Improper lifting may be the biggest mechanical cause of this disorder. If the air is not expelled out of a person's lungs while lifting, it will force the stomach into the esophagus.

Secondly, there are dietary causes. Hiatal hernia just about always accompanies a swollen ileocecal valve. The ileocecal valve is the valve between the small and large intestines which permits material to enter the colon from the large intestine, but prevents material in the colon from moving back into the small intestine. When this valve becomes swollen and irritated it cannot close properly. This allows material from the colon to leak back into the small intestine. This is analogous your sewer backing up into your kitchen. This creates gas and indigestion, which puts pressure on the stomach and presses it tighter against the diaphragm.

The relationship between the ileocecal valve and the hiatal hernia is a chicken/egg situation ... it is hard to know which comes first. However, it is clear that the ileocecal problem aggravates the hernia. Hence, the things that irritate that valve may be causal factors. These are the basic causes of digestive problems: poor food combining, overeating, drinking with meals, overeating and eating when upset.

Lastly, there are emotional causes. According to one applied kinesiologist text a hiatal hernia comes from repressed anger. A person "swallows their anger" and "can't stomach it." When you get angry, you suck your breath upward. If you fail to release this anger, your stomach stays up. I have observed that most of the people with severe hiatal hernias have a great deal of emotional stress and hold a lot of it inside.

Identification

The easiest way to tell if you or someone you know has a hiatal hernia is to place your fingers on the solar Plexus, just below the breastbone. Then take a deep breath. You should feel the solar plexus expand and move outward. If there is no movement at the solar plexus and you have to lift your chest and shoulders to take a deep breath, then you probably have a hiatal hernia. You should be able to take a deep abdominal breath without lifting your shoulders. There are other, more complicated, methods of determining if you have a hiatal hernia, such as muscle testing, but this is a fairly simple and reliable method.

Correction

Since a hiatal hernia is primarily a mechanical problem, the easiest and best way to correct it is mechanically. Medical doctors have attempted surgery to correct this disorder, but the results tend to be poor. Cutting into this area can further weaken it so that the hernia will return in short order. A better method is to manipulate the stomach and bring down the hernia by hand. Unfortunately, you can't do this to yourself. You will need to find a good chiropractor, applied kinesiologist or massage therapist who understands this problem and knows how to correct it. If you want to learn how to do this adjustment to others, you will have to find someone who does it and have them show you how since it is impossible to adequately describe the technique(s) in writing. They have to be learned through demonstration and practice.

Self-Adjustment

There are some self-help adjustment techniques. They aren't as effective as having someone else perform the adjustment, but they may help. The best one I've tried is to drink a pint of warm water first thing in the morning, then stand on your toes and drop suddenly to your heels several times. The warm water helps to relax the stomach and diaphragm and puts some weight in the stomach. By dropping

down suddenly, the weight of the water helps to pull the stomach down. In a mild case, this might be enough to bring the hernia down. In a more severe case it may loosen the stomach and make it easier for someone else to bring it down. It will also help you to keep the stomach down once mechanical corrections have been made.

Nutritional Aids

Until the problem is corrected mechanically; there are some nutritional therapies, which may be of help. Immediate, but temporary, relief of pain and discomfort can often be achieved by the use of a mucilaginous herb like slippery elm or comfrey. These herbs absorb the digestive secretions and help to prevent their traveling back up the esophagus and burning it. They also help to prevent irritation of the ileocecal valve. Comfrey can also speed the healing of this problem once mechanical adjustments have been made. Comfrey/pepsin is a good combination for this problem as well. A digestive aid will help the person obtain the nutrients they need when the hernia is interfering with digestion. This may take the form of a hydrochloric acid supplement or a food enzyme tablet, or perhaps an herbal digestive aid such as papaya and peppermint, chamomile tea, safflowers, ginger root and so forth.

Other food or herb products that have been used to help people with hiatal hernias include: raw cabbage juice (where ulcerations have occurred), balm, barley water, brown rice, celery, coriander, gentian, hops, licorice, marshmallow and passion flower. Dietary modifications may be necessary to relieve the problem and to keep it from reoccurring once it has been corrected. Since the pressure of abdominal gas can push the stomach upward, it would be advisable to avoid gas-forming foods like beans. It would also be wise to watch food combinations carefully and to avoid overeating. Dr. Jack Ritchason recommends that people with hiatal hernias avoid eating any heavy meals after 3 pm.

Below you will find a checklist of symptoms, which will help you in identifying people who have this problem so they can take steps to correct it.

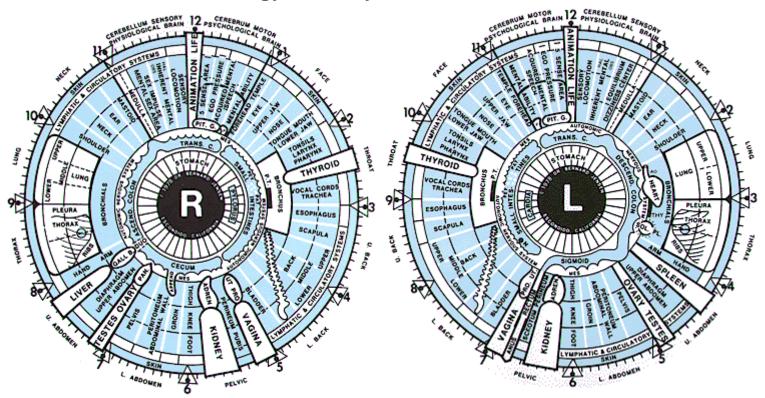
Symptoms of a Hiatal Hernia

What is a Hiatal Hernia? A hiatal hernia occurs when the top of the stomach rolls or slides up into the opening in the diaphragm which the esophagus passes through and becomes stuck there. This condition may create difficulty with digestion (and hence general nutrition and well being) as well as breathing difficulties, nervous problems, circulatory problems and glandular imbalances. All of the following symptoms have been connected with a hiatal hernia. If you have some of these symptoms especially those marked with an asterisk (*) you may wish to consider being checked for this condition.

- **DIGESTIVE DIFFICULTIES** *Belching, *Bloating, *Heartburn, *Difficulty digesting meat/high protein foods, Tension or pressure at the solar plexus, Sensitivity at the waist, Intestinal gas, Regurgitation, Hiccups, Lack or limitation of appetite, Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea, Constipation, Colic in children, Difficulty in gaining weight or overweight, Ulcers.
- **BREATHING AND CIRCULATION PROBLEMS** *Difficulty with deep abdominal breathing, *Difficulty in swallowing capsules, *Asthma, *Inability to take a deep breath from diaphragm, Overall fatigue, Tendency to swallow air, Allergies, Dry tickling cough, Full feeling at base of throat, Pain or burning in upper chest, Pressure in the chest, Pain in the left side of chest, Pressure below breastbone, Lung pain, Rapid heartbeat, Rapid rise in blood pressure, Pain in left shoulder, arm or side of neck.
- **STRUCTURAL COMPLAINTS** TMJ (Temporo-Mandibular Joint Pain), Bruxism (Grinding teeth in sleep), Joint pain, Localized or overall spinal pain, Headaches.
- **STRESS** *Suppression of anger or other emotions, *Living with or having lived with a quicktempered person, Dizziness, Shakiness, Mental Confusion, Anxiety attacks, Insomnia, Hyperactivity in children.
- **OTHER AILMENTS** *Open ileocecal valve, *General weakness, *Difficulty in getting and/or staying healthy, Overactive thyroid, Cravings for sugar or alcohol, Candida Albicans, Menstrual or prostate problems, Urinary difficulties, Hoarseness

For more information about the problem of hiatal hernias, read the book "Hiatal Hernia Syndrome: Insidious Link to Major Illness" by Theodore A. Baroody, Jr., M.A., D.C., "Hiatus Hernia" by Penny Hemphill from an Australian Magazine, Nature & Health, and "Chiropractic Handout".

Iridology Chart by Bernard Jensen, DC



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