

Nature's Field

An Electronic Journal for NSP Distributors

Papaya *Carica papaya*

By Steven Horne

Although I like papaya, I never buy them at the grocery store. They just don't taste right (like store-bought tomatoes don't taste right). If you've ever been in a tropical country and had fresh papaya, you know how good a naturally ripened papaya can be.

But papaya isn't just a tasty fruit, it's also a very good medicine. Both the latex of the papaya plant and the fruits themselves contain two proteolytic (protein-digesting) enzymes—papain and chymopapain. The green fruits, not the ripe fruits, are the best source of these enzymes. Papaya also contains other enzymes, including lysozyme, chitintransferase, glycosidases, callase, pectinesterases, lipases, phosphatases and cycloligases.

Commercial papain is derived from the milky white latex that flows from cuts made in green fruits. It is used to make meat tenderizers for home use, but also finds its way into other commercial applications. Papain is used to clarify beer, treat wool and silk before dyeing and take the hair off of hides before they are tanned. It is also used in personal care products like toothpaste, cosmetics and deodorants.

Of course, in the health world, papain is used in preparations to aid digestion. This is why it is an ingredient in Food Enzymes, NSP's main digestive enzyme formula. Because it breaks down proteins, it is also found in Everybody's Formula, a protein powder. Besides aiding protein digestion, papain has been used to reduce swelling, fever and adhesions after surgery. It can also be used to help rid the body of parasites and heal ulcers.

However, it isn't just papain that's useful in natural healing. The fruits themselves are also a digestive aid, just like raw pineapple, which contains another proteolytic enzyme called bromelain. Papaya fruit is also a natural healing agent. In a London hospital in 1977, a post-operative infection in a kidney transplant patient was treated with strips of papaya that were laid on the wound and left for 24 hours. This cured the infection after all modern medications had failed.



Studies at the University of Nigeria found that extracts of ripe and unripe papaya fruits and seeds had an anti-bacterial action. They are effective against both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria. The crushed seeds yield a compound (the aglycone of glucotropaeolin benzyl isothiocyanate, BITC for short) which is bacteriostatic, bactericidal and anti-fungal. A single dose of 4-5 grams of crushed seeds is effective.

In countries where it grows, papaya has many other medicinal uses. In tropical folk medicine, the latex is used topically to help heal boils, warts, cancerous tumors, boils and freckles. Dried leaves are smoked to relieve asthma and have been used to dress wounds. The seeds are used to expel parasites. The seeds can also be abortive.

Papaya fruit is an ingredient in Papaya Mint Tablets, a chewable digestive aid that is also great for children. It lends help to the digestive process in Stomach Comfort, an antacid formula. It's also an ingredient in SF, a formula that aids liver function and helps in weight loss; Skeletal Strength, a formula for supporting healthy bones; and GreenZone, a natural food blend.

Some individuals have allergic reactions to papaya. They react even to meat that has been tenderized with papain. Such individuals should probably avoid supplements containing papaya or papain. For the rest of us, papaya is a great fruit for supporting healthy digestive function.

Selected References

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In This Issue

Papaya by Steven Horne	1
The Most Important Supplement I Take by Steven Horne	2-5
Kimberly Balas' Clinician's Corner: Understanding Proteinuria	6-7
Parting Thoughts from the Herb Guy: Our Social Need for "Slow Food"	8

If I Were Limited to Only One Supplement, Which One Would I Choose?

The Most Important Supplement I Take

by Steven H. Horne, RH (AHG)

Recently, Karta Purkh Singh Kalsa (co-author of the *Secrets of Chinese Herbs* Course) and I hosted a free conference call on Chinese herbs. We allowed listeners to submit questions via E-mail prior to the call. One of the questioners wanted to know if I could only recommend one Chinese herbal formula what would be it be?

My response was that if I were limited to only being able to recommend one supplement, it wouldn't be a Chinese herbal formula. It would be enzymes. *Plant enzymes* to be specific.

I was introduced to plant enzymes through another company in the early 1990s. I had previously tried NSP's Food Enzymes product, which contains *digestive* enzymes, bile salts, hydrochloric acid (HCl) and a couple of plant enzymes. Digestive enzymes are different from plant enzymes because they come from animal sources. They are the same enzymes our body produces to digest food.

Plant enzymes, of course, come from plants. They are the enzymes naturally present in raw foods. They are also present in fermented foods as they are produced by lactobacillus bacteria (probiotic bacteria). These plant enzymes aren't manufactured by the body; they are supposed to be found in the foods we eat.

There's nothing wrong with Food Enzymes, it's a great product, and one of NSP's top sellers. But, I didn't like taking it. It didn't make my digestive system feel "right." As I'll explain later, I pay a lot of attention to the feedback my body gives me about diet and supplements.

Also, I have this basic philosophical idea that I don't like to take anything my body is supposed to be producing on it's own, if I can help it. My thoughts on this are that all chemicals in the body have feedback loops. When levels of a particular substance rise, it shuts down the body's own production. This, in my opinion, tends to make the body "lazy," and isn't restoring natural function.

However, I do realize that many times, when people's natural digestion has been impaired through illness, injury or age, that this kind of supplementation is helpful. So, I do use Food

Enzymes in these kinds of cases. However, for the most part I prefer plant enzymes because they're the enzymes we would be getting in our diet if we were eating in a healthy, natural way.

My Experience With Plant Enzymes

When I first started taking plant enzymes, I noticed an immediate improvement in my digestion. I think weak digestion has been one of my problems since childhood. That may be because I'm an A Blood Type and A Blood Types tend to have weak digestive systems, but for whatever reason, enzymes were something that made an immediate and obvious improvement for me.

The enzymes I first started using were sold by another network marketing company. Later, I found an even better brand of enzyme products for professionals only and ordered them through my chiropractor. I also recommended them to clients.

A few years later, NSP introduced a line of plant enzyme products and I started using their enzymes. Unfortunately, they discontinued my favorite plant enzyme product, Leguzyme, due to poor sales. That was a product that helps you digest beans and vegetables that cause gas.

However, I still use all of NSP's enzyme products, including Proactazyme Plus, Protease Plus, Hi-Lipase and Lactase Plus. Lactase Plus is very important to me because I'm lactose intolerant and on those rare occasions when I indulge in a little ice cream, it's essential for me. (By the way, 70% of the world's population is lactose intolerant, so there are a lot of us.)

Anyway, I've been taking plant enzyme supplements for nearly 20 years now. They are the only supplement that I take with any great regularity, and the reason is, that I notice a big difference when I don't take them. So, whenever I've been off them for a while, I notice that my digestive health (and over all health) isn't as good, and I get right back on them. They are the *only* supplement I've had this experience with.

But why are plant enzymes such an important supplement? Here are my reasons.

First of all, no supplement you take is going to do you any good if you can't digest and assimilate it. Neither is eating good food. So, if your digestion is poor, then dietary changes, supplements, etc. aren't going to do you a whole lot of good. I know that when I first started in natural healing, I had to really carefully watch my diet. After I learned about the hiatal hernia from Jack Ritchason, got that problem fixed, and started using digestive enzymes, all my other supplements worked better and I didn't have to be so careful about what I ate.

I find a lot of people have very poor digestion. In fact, in my experience, everyone who is chronically ill has digestive problems (more on that later).

Secondly, when I first got started in natural healing, I was taught, "death begins in the colon." That's because auto-intoxication from the waste products in the colon is an underlying cause of numerous diseases. However, if I'm seeing pollution in a mountain stream, then I need to go upstream and look for the source. Problems in the colon begin "upstream" in the stomach. If food isn't digesting properly, it creates waste that builds up downstream in the colon. You can cleanse the colon all day long, but if you don't fix what's happening "upstream" in the digestive organs it will just get polluted all over again. Digestive enzymes work "upstream" to keep the colon healthy.

Third, as we grow older, our digestive system tends to get weaker. Hydrochloric acid and enzyme production diminishes with age and is usually quite deficient by the time a person is 50, although it may start becoming deficient in many people much earlier than that. This deficiency of digestive secretions is a major part of protein and mineral deficiencies in the elderly. It is also why Food Enzymes is practically a "must-have" product for senior citizens.

Fourth, plant enzymes have a sparing effect on digestive enzymes. By getting adequate amount of plant enzymes when you are younger, you reduce stress on your digestive organs, which keeps them healthier longer. This has a major anti-aging effect.

Fifth, most Americans don't get a lot of these enzymes in their diet because most of the food they eat is processed, cooked food. In addition, many foods Americans eat contain enzyme inhibitors that actually interfere with enzyme activity. Some of these enzyme inhibitors are chemical additives meant to keep foods from spoiling, but others are naturally-occurring. Plant enzymes not only supplement these natural enzymes missing from our diet, they help to "override" the enzyme inhibitors in people's diets.

Understanding Digestion

To further understand the importance of enzymes (and why we need them), it helps to understand a little about the digestive process. Here are some essential facts.

Digestion begins in the mouth, with the teeth and the saliva. Most Americans eat too fast. I have a tendency to eat too fast, but I've been learning to slow down and getting better at it. When you eat more slowly, you enjoy your food more. You also get "full" quicker as your body has time to register that you've had enough to eat. This helps you lose weight. It also helps your food digest better and that makes you healthier. However, the fact that most Americans eat too fast, means that digestive enzymes can at least help them make up for this problem.

Digestion continues in the stomach with the secretion of hydrochloric acid and pepsin. With all the ads on TV about antacids and acid blockers, you'd think that acid in the stomach is a bad thing. It isn't, it's a very good thing. You need hydrochloric acid (HCl) to break down proteins properly and you also need it to absorb minerals like calcium, magnesium, zinc and copper. Also, HCl is part of your pH buffering system. It may sound crazy, but neutralizing your stomach acid actually makes your body more acidic.

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The interesting thing is that most people who suffer from acid indigestion are actually acid and enzyme deficient. If you get burning pains in your stomach about one hour after eating, then you don't have enough digestive secretions to break down your food. Taking plant enzymes with meals will actually help this.

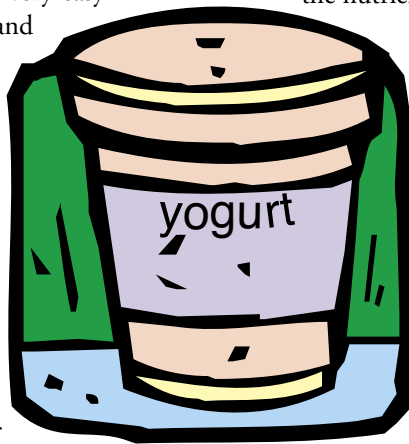
I sometimes get this type of acid indigestion, especially when I mix heavy grains with meat. I can eat grains and vegetables and vegetables with meat, but I don't do well with a lot of grain and protein. Here's how I deal with the problem—I take bitters in liquid form (not Digestive Bitters because its too sweet for me—the more bitter the remedy, the better it works). My usual choice is a glycerine extract of goldenseal or goldenseal powder straight from the capsules (open them and dump the powder in your mouth). This rapidly reduces the burning pain in my stomach. (I take a little every five minutes with water until I feel better.) The nice thing about bitters is that they don't interfere with digestive secretions, they enhance them. Liquid bitters is a good way to restore natural digestive function.

Stomach Acid and Calcium

And, while we're talking about stomach acid, one of the most ridiculous things people do is to take various forms of calcium carbonate as calcium supplements thinking this will build their bones. Calcium carbonate blocks HCl production in the stomach, which is why it's used in antacid tablets. By blocking HCl, calcium carbonate supplements are also interfering with proper digestion of proteins and mineral assimilation. In other words, it's reducing digestive capacity.

Even the calcium that is absorbed from calcium carbonate is not in a bound form, which means it isn't very easy to utilize. So instead of going into the tissues and bones, it winds up getting dumped in the urine. This alkalizes the urine and makes people think they are balancing their pH. They aren't. They're really just temporarily buffering the acid, without correcting the underlying problems that cause the waste acid buildup.

pH buffering is more than just getting an alkaline reading on a urine pH strip. You can do the same thing with baking soda and its a whole lot cheaper. Besides, using calcium carbonate to buffer acid increases the risk of kidney stones and calcification. If you really want to alkalize, eat lots of green leafy vegetables. In my experience, they not only supply calcium and buffer pH, they help, instead of interfering with digestion.



I've heard Jack Ritchason talk about "curing" people with acid indigestion by giving them PDA, which supplements hydrochloric acid production. This can also help make the system more alkaline. As I've mentioned earlier, I don't personally like the way PDA makes my stomach feel. I do better with bitters, aromatics and enzymes.

Dietary Considerations

Since, plant enzymes replace the enzymes we're missing by eating cooked and processed foods, the question naturally arises, should we eat everything raw. It's an appealing idea and makes sense to me on a certain level, however, it hasn't proven very practical for me when I've tried it. I find I do better when I have at least 50%-60% of my diet raw. Some vegetables just seem to digest better (for me) if I cook them. I've learned there is a reason for this.

Human beings lack an enzyme called cellulase. Animals that graze produce this enzyme, which breaks down the cellulose (a fiber) in plant foods and makes the minerals and nutrients available. Light cooking (such as a quick stir fry or light steaming) helps break down the cellulose structure in many veggies and releases their nutrients for absorption. So, some cooking can actually make many nutrients more available to us. So, while I try to eat some raw fruits and vegetables every day, I don't eat everything raw.

Another thing I've learned is that grains, nuts, beans and other seeds are all difficult to digest when raw. In order to hold nutrients in a dormant state, all seeds contain enzyme inhibitors. When the seed begins to sprout, the enzyme inhibitors are deactivated and the enzymes are activated. This starts transforming the nutrients and making them bioavailable.

According to Sally Fallon, in *Nourishing Traditions*, Dr. Weston Price (author of *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*) discovered that all native people's soaked grains, nuts, legumes and seeds before cooking and eating them. Soaking deactivates the enzyme inhibitors and makes the food bioavailable. She further indicates that bread used to be partially fermented—that is, prepared as a sourdough. What this means is that the dough was allowed to sit long enough for bacterial enzymes to partially break down nutrients in the grain before baking. This makes the nutrients in the grain more available for utilization than they are in modern commercial bread.

This is just one example of how traditional people used enzymes to their advantage. All fermented foods are enzyme rich foods and were often eaten with other cooked foods. These

fermented foods were natural enzyme supplements which supplied the extra enzymes needed to help break down the cooked foods these people ate. These enzyme-rich fermented foods were typically served as condiments with the meal.

Fermented foods include cultured dairy products, such as yoghurt, cheese and keifer. There are also fermented vegetable foods such as cultured soy foods (miso, Natto), pickled vegetables (sauerkraut, cucumbers, Kim Chi) and naturally fermented beverages (traditional beers and wines). Some cultures also fermented animal foods, like fish. Raw apple cider vinegar is another natural fermented food, which has been used to improve digestion.

These foods are not only good sources of enzymes, they also supply probiotics, friendly bacteria necessary for gastrointestinal health. So, fermented foods were not only enzyme supplements, they were probiotic supplements.

Unfortunately, in modern “germ-phobic” society most of these pickles, sauerkraut, fermented beverages, etc. are cooked or pasteurized after the fermentation process, which destroys both the probiotics and the enzymes. This increases shelf life, and prevents the raw E. coli infection that happens when food is mishandled, but destroys most of the benefits traditional societies derived from these foods.

Fortunately, many health food stores sell “raw” fermented products which are enzyme-rich. You can also learn to make your own or take enzyme supplements. After reading Sally Fallon’s book, I got some Keifer starter and have experimented with making my own Keifer with raw milk from a local dairy. I blend it with frozen fruit and it is wonderful. I’d like to try making some of the naturally fermented beverages (such as ginger beer) she has recipes for, but I haven’t had the time.

I find eating these fermented foods with meals does the same thing for me that digestive enzymes do. For example, if I eat some red meat with raw sauerkraut or kim chi it does not upset my digestive system, whereas, if I eat a typical “meat and potatoes” meal it upsets my digestive tract (unless I take digestive enzymes with it).

Indigestion

Most people in our culture assume that indigestion is just something that “happens” to you, i.e., it’s none of your fault. But indigestion is always a sign that what you just ate was “wrong.” It means that your body is not able to digest what you just consumed, hence you have what should really be called “miss-digestion.” I pay attention to indigestion and try to avoid eating in ways that cause indigestion because when you have indigestion you’re creating inflammation in your digestive tract and that leads to chronic illness.

Conversely, when digestion goes smoothly and the food doesn’t feel “heavy” on my stomach and there is no feeling of discomfort, stuffiness, gas, bloating, etc., then I know that what I ate was good. This is why I know that enzymes are good for me. They make my digestive system feel good, and help restore that good feeling when I do something that makes my digestive system feel “wrong.”

If people would simply pay more attention to how the food they are eating is affecting them, they would soon learn to eat in a way that produced better health. This is more useful than trying to follow any “expert” advice on nutrition.

More Enzyme Uses

A very bright young herbalist, Thomas Easley, clued me into a new and very valuable use for enzymes a couple of years ago. He does enzyme cleanses for cancer patients where he has them fast and take enzymes every few hours for a couple of days. This made a light bulb go off in my head.

When I travel, I sometimes get constipated and my digestive tract gets sluggish because I find it harder to get quality food. As a result, I start to get a little “acid” stomach and feel bloated and constipated. Now, when this happens, I know I can “fix” the problem with enzymes. What I do is this—I stop eating and start taking 2 enzyme capsules every two hours while drinking lots of water. In about 4-6 hours, my system clears out, my appetite returns and I feel fine again. In other words, digestive enzymes make a great “laxative.”

This leads me to believe that many people who are constipated are actually enzyme deficient. As a result, I’ve started using enzymes for cleaning and not just for digestion. Now, I take enzymes with my fiber drink and cleansing herbs in the morning. I find this works really well to keep my digestive tract working properly.

Enzymes are also therapeutically useful for a wide range of illnesses. Enzymes, particularly protease (protein-digesting) enzymes, are an important aid to eliminating parasites and to helping the body fight cancer. As previously indicated, I learned from Jack Ritchason, and my own subsequent clinical experience, that all chronically ill people have poor digestion. These people nearly always benefit from taking enzyme supplements. However, I’ve found enzymes to be a *critical* part of helping people with parasites, chronic infections, cancer, auto-immune disorders, allergies (both respiratory and digestive), chronic sinus problems, digestive disorders and mood problems.

Good digestion is one of the foundations of good health. That’s why enzymes are one of the most important, if not the most important, basic supplement people need. I would hate to be without them.



Kimberly Balas' Clinician's Corner

Understanding Proteinuria

I've had the pleasure of taking courses with both you and Steven over the years. At one of your sites I recall seeing a protocol using NSP for proteinuria but cannot seem to relocate this. Can you help me with this problem?

I love the Tree of Light site and you have a wealth of information. I hope to be more on board as my practice grows. I look forward to hearing from you.

Terri

Proteinuria describes a condition in which the urine contains an abnormal amount of protein. Proteins are the building blocks for all body parts, including muscles, bones, hair and nails. Proteins in your blood also perform a number of important functions. They protect you from infection, help your blood clot, and keep the right amount of fluid circulating throughout your body.

As blood passes through healthy kidneys, they filter waste products out of the blood and leave things the body needs, like proteins, in the blood. Most proteins are too big to pass through the kidneys into the urine. Proteins from the blood can escape into the urine when the filters of the kidney, called glomeruli, are damaged. The protein that is most likely to appear in urine is albumin. Because of this, the term albuminuria is sometimes used when a urine test detects albumin, specifically. Albumin's function is to maintain osmotic pressure in the blood stream, that is, to hold fluid in the blood. Albumin acts like a sponge, soaking up fluid from body tissues and keeping it in circulation. Bilirubin is another protein that may appear in the urine.

Proteinuria is detected by urinalysis, but there are other clues this may be happening. For instance, large amounts of protein in your urine may cause it to look foamy in the toilet. Also, because the protein has left your body, your blood can no longer keep all the fluid in circulation, and you may notice swelling in your hands, feet, abdomen or face. These are signs of very large protein loss. However, more commonly, you may have proteinuria without noticing *any* signs or symptoms. Urinalysis testing is the only way to find out how much protein you have in your urine.

A positive urine protein reading is associated with oxidative stress, potential diabetes, anaerobic metabolism and

a higher risk for stroke, if a progression shows. Underlying chronic inflammation is usually a root cause. While proteins may signal a problem, the type of proteins being passed can help establish the source of the problem.

Research shows that the level and type of proteinuria (whether the urinary proteins are albumin only or include other proteins) strongly determine the extent of damage and whether you are at risk for developing progressive kidney failure.

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Proteinuria is also associated with cardiovascular disease. Damaged blood vessels may lead to heart failure or stroke as well as kidney failure.

Types Of Proteinuria

Proteinuria can be divided into three categories: transient (or intermittent), orthostatic and persistent.

Transient proteinuria — Transient proteinuria is by far the most common form, occurring in 4 percent of men and 7 percent of women on a single examination. Transient proteinuria resolves on subsequent examinations in almost all patients. Stresses such as fever and exercise may be responsible for this type of transient increase in protein excretion. For example, with marked exercise, protein excretion can exceed 1.5 mg per minute in normal individuals (which is the equivalent of over 2 grams per day, if sustained).

Orthostatic proteinuria — With this condition, a person's protein excretion is increased in the upright position, but normal when the person is lying down. (Normal protein excretion is less than 50 mg in eight hours). Orthostatic proteinuria is present in 2 to 5 percent of adolescents, but is unusual in people over the age of 30. It is not known why orthostatic proteinuria occurs, but it is thought that it might be due to an exaggeration of the body's normal response to changes in position, a subtle abnormality in the glomeruli, or an exaggerated response of the circulatory system to postural changes.

Orthostatic proteinuria is diagnosed by obtaining a "split" urine collection in which two specimens are obtained: one while the patient is upright and one, at night, while the patient is lying down. Orthostatic proteinuria typically disappears with age, and studies have found that kidney function remains normal in these patients even after a 50-year follow-up.

Persistent proteinuria — In contrast to transient and orthostatic proteinuria, persistent proteinuria is more likely to reflect underlying kidney disease or systemic disorder. As one example, congestive heart failure is often associated with mild proteinuria. Other patients with proteinuria may have an underlying glomerular disease (disease of the glomeruli), which may be primary glomerular disease, such as focal glomerulosclerosis or membranous nephropathy, or secondary glomerular disease (as a result of another disease), such as diabetic nephropathy.

A trace amount of protein in the urine to 1+ positive is generally associated with:

- Early glomerular dysfunction/damage
- Diseases that produce abnormal proteins that may be resistant to filtration to reabsorption
- Tubular disorders

Higher readings (2+ to 4+ positive readings) for protein in the urine are associated with:

- Glomerular disease damage
- Tubular damage due to multiple myeloma
- Diabetic complications: stroke, heart disease and kidney dysfunction, retinopathy, neuropathy

Protocols

Obviously, an exact protocol for proteinuria is going to be determined by what is actually happening in the body. For instance, if the person is suffering from congestive heart failure or diabetes, these conditions need to be addressed. However, a basic protocol for proteinuria would include the following:

Obviously, a critical factor here is to help the body replace lost protein from the blood. Enzymes should be taken to help the body with protein metabolism. These should include Protease Plus between meals and Food Enzymes with meals. Digestive Bitters taken before meals will also help to stimulate digestion. Also, take Nature's Fresh internally. In addition to aiding protein digestion, these enzymes help to reduce inflammation and encourage cellular repair.

It is also helpful to take Free Amino Acids, which provide amino acids to help the body make the proteins it requires.

Other supplements to consider include SE, which helps the liver and aids fat metabolism; alfalfa, which contains many minerals and nutrients that assist healing; Capsicum, Garlic and Parsley, which aids circulation; and Oregon grape, which helps reduce inflammation, fight infection and improve lymphatic drainage to remove fluid from tissues.

Kimberly Balas is a board certified naturopath and clinical nutritionist. She is currently head of the research department and a certified instructor for all Tree of Light courses. She is available for consultations by phone or at her Wyoming office. For more information on scheduling a consult please phone 307-277-2466.





Parting Thoughts from “The Herb Guy”

Our Social Need for “Slow Food” Stress and Digestion

In my article on enzymes, I mentioned the hiatal hernia problem. Anyone who can't take a deep abdominal breath, where their stomach expands as they inhale and contracts as they exhale, has a digestive problem. They may not have a full-blown hiatal hernia (where the stomach protrudes through the diaphragm muscle into the chest cavity), but they do have a digestive problem.

When the stomach tenses against the diaphragm, blocking its downward movement to inflate the lungs, it always puts pressure on the vagus nerve. This may directly impede secretion of hydrochloric acid and pepsin in the stomach, but even if it doesn't, it is a sign of chronic, internally-held stress and stress always interferes with digestion.

It's really quite simple. Your sympathetic nervous system, which is activated under stress, shuts down the digestive organs and limits their secretions. The parasympathetic nervous system (which helps you relax) activates the digestive system. Chronic stress tenses the stomach permanently and results in very poor stomach and digestive function.

The solar plexus tenses under the sympathetic response and relaxes under the parasympathetic response. So, the inability to take a deep abdominal breath is a sign of excess sympathetic nervous stress and an inability to relax. Since just about everyone I see has this problem, I wind up teaching people how to learn to breathe correctly to reduce their stress level and improve their digestive function.

So, chronically ill people practically always need help with stress management and digestion. It's interesting to note that many herbs that aid digestion also reduce tension and stress, including chamomile, peppermint, lemon balm and catnip. This is because they activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps a person relax and also helps stimulate digestive secretions.

There is a lesson in all of this. Eating is meant to be a relaxing, pleasurable experience. In fact, in order for digestion to work properly, it has to be a pleasant, relaxing experience. You just can't digest food properly when you are hurried, stressed, worried and upset. These stressful emotions will always interfere with digestion.

So, when we eat, we should take time to enjoy what we are eating. Mealtime conversation should be pleasant and happy. Don't talk about problems at the dinner table! Don't eat on the

run or when stressed. Relax and breathe deeply while you eat. It's a simple thing, and used to be an important part of family and social life, but it's hard to remember to do in modern society.

After all, we live in a fast food culture. The odd thing is this—most fast food is “bad” food. It is lacking in flavor, color and satisfaction. It does contain chemicals and additives that make it addictive and that “mask” its bad flavor, but it certainly isn't good food.

Good food takes time. It takes time to grow good food. It takes time to prepare good food. And, it takes time to eat and enjoy good food. That's why there are many people pushing for “slow food.” In fact, there is “a non-profit, eco-gastronomic, member-supported organization” that was founded in 1989 to “counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world.” You can learn more about the slow food movement at www.slowfood.com.

Whether you choose to join the slow food movement or not, you can improve your personal health by slowing down when you eat. If you have a tendency to digestive problems, don't just change the foods you eat, change how you eat them.

Chew your food thoroughly. Put your fork or spoon down between bites and take a breath. Talk about pleasant things at mealtime (laughter is good for digestion). Have a cup of a nice, soothing nervine tea such as chamomile, peppermint, catnip or a blend of these types of herbs with meals. These things will activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which will turn on your digestive system, and help you get the most out of the food you eat.

Enjoy a little slow food. Your stomach will thank you for it and reward you with better health.

Steven Horne is a Registered Herbalist (AHG) and past president of the American Herbalists Guild. Founder of Tree of Light Publishing, he is the author of many books, courses, and videos on natural healing. He is available for consults at ABC Herbs in St. George, UT. For more information call 435-627-1682 or go to www.steven-horne.com.

