



How to Test for Low Stomach Acid & Supplement with Betaine HCl

By RoseMarie Pierce B.Sc.Pharm, Holistic Pharmacist

This test is useful for assessing the integrity of the stomach lining and the amount of Hydrochloric Acid (HCl) produced by the stomach. Betaine HCl is a stomach acid supplement. The body responds to acid supplementation by producing more acid of its own. Following the full program will help teach your body how to produce its own acid.

Each person will have a specific initial supplementary Betaine HCl dosage, use the below method to discover yours:

1. Eat a complete meal containing at least 15-20 grams of protein (e.g., 4-6 ounces of meat or other protein). Start by taking 1 capsule (500 mg) of Betaine HCl during the beginning of that meal.
2. Observe your body for the next 15 minutes or until the meal is finished. Look for a gentle burning (heat) in the throat/chest, or a slight pain or heaviness in the upper stomach region, below the diaphragm.
3. Increase the number of caps at the protein meal by 1 per day, until you reach the first sign of stomach discomfort as described in step #2.
4. When this happens, the ideal Betaine HCl dosage is 1 capsule less. For example, if you felt the discomfort going from 4 caps to 5 caps, then 4 caps is the proper dosage for a normal meal.
5. Do not exceed 5 capsules per meal, even if you are not experiencing burning.
6. Continue with this dose until it too begins to cause burning. Once this dose causes burning, reduce the dose by 1 capsule and continue with the therapy.
7. Reduce the dose by 1 capsule every time burning occurs until you no longer require the Betaine HCl.
8. Small meals or snacks do not require as many Betaine HCl capsules as large meals. (for a small snack, such as a piece of fruit, you won't need any at all)
9. If you forget to take your Betaine HCl capsules, they will still be effective if taken 2 hours or more after eating.
10. As digestion improves, the amount of HCl supplements will be lowered until finally a person wouldn't require them any longer unless under extreme stress or in times of over-eating

CAUTION: Do not use betaine HCl if you have difficulty swallowing, gastric ulcers, esophageal damage, or a nervous system condition that may prevent you from feeling a burning sensation. People that are "high risk", shouldn't take Betaine HCL without supervision or if consuming any anti-inflammatory drugs (i.e., corticosteroids, aspirin, Indocid, ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or other NSAIDs). These drugs can damage the GI lining and supplementing with HCl could aggravate it, increasing the risks of bleeding or ulcer.

RoseMarie Pierce, B.Sc.Pharm, earned her degree in Pharmacy from Dalhousie University in 1972. After extensive studies in herbal and nutritional medicine, RoseMarie integrated these disciplinary practices with her pharmacy education to become Canada's first Holistic Pharmacist.

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