

The Tuesday Minute

Nutritional information.... one byte at a time

This Week's Topic

Try This “Low Tech” Digestive Fix

When I hear about a low tech inexpensive way to fix a problem, my ears really perk up. Surprisingly enough with this drugless therapy I'm about to outline, the SICKER your patient is, the MORE they respond. It's known by most nutritionist as “food combining”.

I was first exposed to “food combining” when I had lunch with a well known Osteopathic Physician Dr. William Ellis or Dr. Bill to many. At the time he was 76 years old and maintained a rigorous schedule that few of us would dare to attempt. Retired for many years, Dr. Ellis still worked with physicians all over the world analyzing blood chemistries 14-hours a day 6 days a week. He loved his work and the people he was working with.

When he was in his 20's, before osteopathic school, he was a professional baseball player. During that period he completely lost his health but eventually found out that he had an inability to make HCL and was diagnosed as achlorhydric. He could not produce any HCL. Obviously he was suffering from severe protein deficiency. He couldn't digest protein because he didn't have enough HCL in his stomach to break the protein into the necessary amino acids.

We also know that if the chyme is not acidic enough when it leaves the pyloric cap other signaling hormones will not turn on the necessary enzymes to digest fats and starches. Needless to say, he was in serious trouble and spent the next

50 years of his life experimenting with his own body.

Dr. Ellis used to laugh as he described how many suits he destroyed because in his day you had to drink HCL in a glass straw and if you spilled a little or didn't clean the straw properly a little splash of HCL and there goes the suit. I mention Dr. Ellis because here was a man who lived to his late 80's as a vibrant, fun, conversationally astute, passionate physician, but he had to learn how to eat right.

Remember he was completely achlorhydric, but he followed his food combining diet and only took 2 small Hydro-Zyme tablets (each tablet supplies 200 mg of HCL and glutamic acid), a paltry amount compared to what a healthy stomach produces. Astonishingly proper food combining saved his life.

High potency HCL tablets were not available in his day; he had to learn the principles of physiologically eating foods for optimal digestion to survive. Dr. Bill would be honored to know that his condition has blessed other human beings. I wanted to tell his story because he inspires us and perhaps telling his story will somehow help relate “dry” physiological facts to your patients.

Our patients have GI tracts that are full of fermentation, putrefication, and toxins to put it mildly. One of Dr. Bill's cardinal rules and one that has been echoed by many other authors is

that we should never mix high proteins like meat, fish, eggs or cheese with concentrated starches like potatoes, cereals, breads, pastries, or refined sweets at the same meal.

We know we need HCL to turn on pepsin and ultimately to digest proteins and that mainly takes place in the stomach. Another one of my favorite mentors, Dr. George Goodheart, was also a staunch believer in food combining. He often quoted work done at Mayo Clinic where they document 2 very important principles. The first one is that sugars inhibit the secretion of HCL in the stomach. This means that if we eat a big steak and our stomachs begin the secretion of HCL to digest the food, a good thing; and then we add simple sugars like bread, potatoes, pie, brownies, soft drinks, most fruit juices that the stomach will slow down its release of HCL.

Think of the traditional fast food meal, hamburger patty, on a sugar laden bun, tempered with hot french fried potatoes, washed down south with a biggy sized coke. The sugars found in the bun, the fries, the drink all slow down the release of HCL.

The second principle Mayo Clinic discovered is just as important, namely sugars combine with the free hydrochloric acid in the stomach, which prevents the HCL from acting on the protein and the activation of other enzymes which is what is needed for compete protein digestion.

I can still remember Dr. Goodheart giving a word picture that just as bread will soak up water when we put it in a dish, the same bread will combine or soak up the free HCL in the stomach thereby assuring that it cannot digest the protein it was intended to digest.

So back to our burger meal with fries and a coke, not only will the sugars from bread, potatoes, and corn syrup assure that the stomach will release less HCL, but now we see that the starches will soak up a portion of that already reduced volume. Now let's make it personal.

How many times have you or family members eaten a heavy protein meal like turkey with some bread stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy? Maybe some sugared sweet potatoes, and then add pie for dessert? What happens? Well, we know this eating event as Thanksgiving; and the result is indigestion and half the people falling asleep in front of the TV.

Rewind back to my meal with Dr. Ellis. We took him to lunch, and he ate a big hamburger. He threw away the bun and ate the trimmings, a side order of steamed vegetables with 2 Hydro-Zyme, which incidentally is a product he designed. He didn't want to eat sugars that would inhibit what little acid he would use to digest his food.

There's more to discuss on this topic, but for now I have provided a simplified food combining chart for you to play with.

To summarize, this "food combining" strategy has made a profound change in my energy levels and has been a real blessing when working with those difficult GI cases. First try it for yourself; and then you can speak with authority as you implement it those challenging patients.

Thanks for reading. I'll see you next Tuesday.