

## **Indigestion**

Indigestion or dyspepsia is one of the most common ailments today and is caused by dietetic errors. It is a condition of the stomach in which digestive juices are incorrectly secreted, resulting in discomfort.

The alimentary canal and the process of digestion begin at the mouth. The stomach, which is the most abused organ of the body, looks like a pear-shaped pouch. It forms part of the digestive tract which is a tube coiled in loops nearly 28 feet in length. It varies in size and position depending on how much food it contains. An overloaded stomach tends to prevent the diaphragm from functioning properly. It may also press on the heart.

### **Symptoms**

Abdominal pain, a feeling of undue fullness after eating, heartburn, loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting and excessive wind or gas are the usual symptoms of indigestion. Other symptoms include a bad taste in the mouth, coated tongue, foul breath and pain in the upper abdomen.

### **Treatment**

The only effective treatment for indigestion is a thorough cleansing of the digestive tract; adoption of a sensible diet and a change in the style of living. The best way to commence the treatment is to adopt an all-fruit diet for about five days. After the all-fruit diet, the patient may take to a restricted diet of easily digestible foods, consisting of lightly cooked vegetables, juicy fruits and buttermilk for about 10 days. He may thereafter gradually embark upon a well-balanced diet.

The use of fruits in general is beneficial in the treatment of indigestion. They flush out the undigested food residue and accumulated faeces and re-establish health to perfect order. Being rich in water, they clean body mechanisms thoroughly. The best among the fruits in dyspepsia is lemon. Its juice reaches the stomach and attacks the bacteria, inhibiting the formation of acids. Lemon juice removes indigestion by dislodging this acid and other harmful substances from the stomach, thereby strengthening and prompting a healthy appetite.

The orange is another effective food remedy in chronic indigestion. It gives rest to the digestive organs and supplies nutrition in a most easily assimilable form. It also stimulates the flow of digestive juices thereby improving digestion and increasing appetite. It creates suitable conditions for the development of friendly bacteria in the intestines. Another fruit useful in indigestion is grapes. They are a light food which removes indigestion and irritation of the stomach in a short time and relieves heat. Pineapple is also valuable. It acts as a tonic in dyspepsia and relieves much of the digestive disorders of dyspeptics. Half a glass of pineapple juice should be taken after a meal in this condition.

The sufferer from indigestion must always follow the under-mentioned rules regarding eating:

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1. Never eat and drink together. Water or other liquids should be taken half an hour before and one hour after a meal. Milk, buttermilk and vegetable soups are, however, foods and can be taken with meals.
2. Never hurry through a meal. Eat very slowly and chew your food as thoroughly as possible.
3. Never eat to a full stomach. Always leave the table with a feeling that you could eat more.
4. Never sit down to a meal, feeling worried, tired, excited or in a bad temper as such feelings temporarily paralyze the manufacture of digestive juices including hydrochloride.
5. Do not eat if appetite is lacking. Miss a meal or two, if necessary, until real appetite returns.
6. Never boil vegetables, always steam them.
7. Do not mix too many foods at the same meal. Never eat raw vegetables and raw fruits together as they require a different set of enzymes. Take protein and starchy foods separate as far as possible.

Yogic asanas such as ardh-matsyasana, srvangasana, uttanpadasana, pavnuktasana, vajrasana, yogamudra, bhujangasana, shalabhasana, and shavasana, kriyas like jalneti and kunjai, and pranayamas like kapalbhati, anuloma-viloma, and ujjai are highly beneficial in the treatment of indigestion. Light exercises such as walking, golf and swimming also help digestion.

### **Water Treatment**

A daily enema should be administered to cleanse toxic bowel waste. Other beneficial water treatments include wet girdle pack applied at night, application of ice bags over the stomach half an hour after meals, a daily cold friction bath and alternate hot and cold hip baths at night. Massaging of the abdomen also helps.

### **Reference**

Shri H.K. Bakhru. (1999). Natures Cure.