

At-Home Tests for Low Stomach Acid

Very low stomach acid, called hypochlorhydria, can lead to many health problems in addition to acne. Research has shown that an estimated 40% of acne patients have low stomach acid, so it's important to get this tested.

Before we dive into the two most accurate at-home tests for low stomach acid, I would like to review the symptoms.

Symptoms for low stomach acid (in addition to acne) include:

- Bloating
- Gas (especially within an hour of eating)
- Heartburn
- Acid reflux
- Nausea
- Chronic fatigue
- Constipation
- Seeing undigested food in stool.
- Lots of food sensitivities
- Anemia and weakness
- Eczema
- Hair loss
- Diarrhea
- Weak or cracked nails
- Auto-immune disorders

Because of the overlap with symptoms of low stomach acid and other health problems, the best way to determine whether you have the condition is through testing, either at home or in a lab.

If your symptoms are more severe, skip these at-home tests and see a doctor for specialized lab testing directly.

Betaine HCL Challenge Test

This simple test provides reasonably reliable results at home. The test is best for anyone suffering from mild cases of the above symptoms.

To perform the test, you'll need [Betaine HCL with pepsin](#). Eat a meal with at least six ounces of meat, and take one tablet while you're in the middle of the meal. Finish your meal, and monitor your symptoms afterward. If you have indigestion, like feeling of burning hotness on your chest, your stomach acid levels are likely where they should be. However, if you're feeling fine, your acid levels are likely low.

Repeat this test at least three times, and if you get the same results, you can be reasonably sure about the status of your stomach acid levels.

Baking Soda Acid Test

For another at-home test that will deliver reasonably accurate results, all you need is baking soda. This test is cheap and safe. However, many variables can trigger false positives or negatives, so you should perform this test, ideally, over five consecutive mornings, for the most accurate results.

You must start with an empty stomach for this test. Mix ¼ tsp of baking soda in four ounces of cold water, and drink the blend first thing in the morning before you eat or drink anything else. Time how long it takes for you to burp. If it takes more than five minutes for you to burp or you don't burp at all, it's a sign of low stomach acid.

This test works by triggering a chemical reaction in your stomach from mixing the baking soda with stomach acid. Your body's natural response if you have enough stomach acid is release carbon dioxide gas, which triggers burping.

What should I do if I have low stomach acid levels?

To help increase your stomach acid levels naturally, chew your food more before swallowing, and stop eating when you are feeling 80% full so you don't overwhelm your body with more food than it can handle at one time.

Also, limit processed foods & sugars, monitor your stress levels, and take digestive enzymes to help break down food and absorb the nutrients from your meal. If you decide to take digestive enzymes, consult with your healthcare provider on the dosage and time frame. For some individuals, it could take just 1 to 2 months to increase stomach acid levels naturally.

As we covered in the lesson, the most powerful thing you can do for low stomach acid is take a Betaine Hydrochloride (HCL) supplement with pepsin, right before meals with protein. HCL is very strong supplement, and if you plan to take this supplement, please consult with your doctor because the dosage varies from person to person and misuse can damage the stomach lining.