A Look at the Acid Alkaline Question

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Acid and alkaline is a measurement of the pH of internal body fluids. A pH of 7.0 is neutral, pH below 7.0 is acidic and a pH of above 7.0 is alkaline. Every physiological process in the body operates optimally at a specific pH. The stomach, for example, needs to be acidic in order to breakdown food and to kill off any bacteria or toxins in the food. The pH of urine is usually slightly acidic as the kidney is responsible for filtering the blood and excreting waste products which are often acidic. In order for the body to maintain health the pH is closely controlled, for example the pH of blood needs to remain between 7.35 – 7.45 which is slightly alkaline.

Although there are distinct and specific ideal pH values for different aspects of the body, when references are made about the body being too acidic it is usually referring to the fluid within and between the cells which function best when it is slightly alkaline. Most degenerative diseases such as, cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease, as well as other diseases such as allergies, gout, arthritis, kidney stones and gallstones have all been linked to the body fluids becoming too acidic.

Factors which increase acidic levels in the body:

- Impaired respiration
- Impaired kidney function
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Circulatory problems
- Inadequate exercise or too much intense physical exercise
- Too much mental or emotional stress
- Lifestyle factors such as smoking, drugs, or excess environmental pollution
- A diet too high in protein, sugar, salt or acid forming foods

In the body there is a priority hierarchy with respect to pH, with blood being the most important and having the most narrow range that it functions within. When the pH of blood becomes too acidic there are internal control mechanisms that will 'leach' or pull calcium from the bones as calcium is the mineral responsible for buffering the blood when it is too acidic. When the acid level in the body is too high the body either has to excrete the excess acid, store the acid in tissues and cells or buffer the acid with other chemicals. What is important to remember with respect to the body's ability to maintain optimal pH balance is that thee body can only use the nutrients and hence chemicals that it has acquired from the food you consume to shift and maintain health. When the body is unable to maintain optimal pH values of all bodily fluids your health is affected.

The signs and symptoms of the body fluids being too acidic include low energy, fatigue, excess weight, poor digestion, aches and pains and sometimes the onset of more serious health concerns such as diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer, kidney and respiratory illnesses or cardiovascular damage. A body that is too acidic also has a limited ability

to detoxify heavy metals and to repair and maintain health.

You can measure the pH or your urine and your saliva using pH test strips to indicate how efficiently your body is maintaining pH balance. The normal range for the pH of urine is 6.0 – 6.5 in the morning and 6.5 – 7.0 in the evening. The normal range for the pH of saliva is about 6.5 – 7.5 all day long. The pH of the urine indicates how well your body is assimilating minerals, especially calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium. These minerals are 'buffers' and are used to assist the balance the body when it is too acidic. The pH of the saliva indicates the activity of the digestive enzymes in the body.

The one factor that people can influence the most is their diet. The food we eat provides the building blocks for the body. When you look at your diet what tools are you providing your body to work with? Most people to can relate to feeling aches and pains, low energy or feeling unwell after eating certain foods.

Tips for Alkalinizing your Diet

1. To maintain health most people need to consume 60% of alkaline foods and 40% of acidic foods in each meal. If you are recovering or dealing with a health issue you may have to increase the percentage of alkaline foods and decrease the acidic – more of an 80 / 20 ratio.
2. During the summer increase the amount of alkaline food you consume and in the winter decrease the amount of alkaline food slightly.
3. Eat at least 8 servings (4 cups) of vegetables a day. Have at least 1 cup of vegetables a day that include greens such as kale, collards, mustard greens, rapini.
4. Have about 2 pieces of fruit a day. Choose fresh fruit that is in season. Canned and dried fruit are more acidic. Cranberry and pomegranate also tend to be acidic so limit your intake of these.
5. Drink the juice of half a lemon or lime in water as a beverage.
6. Consume millet and quinoa as an option to the more acid forming grains, such as wheat.
7. Choose fish and lamb over beef and chicken as they are less acid forming. Have vegetables when you consume protein.
8. Use olive oil as it less acid forming than other vegetable oils.
9. Avoid coffee, caffeine, pop, sugar, alcohol and other strongly acidic food and beverages.
10. Learn to breathe properly with slow abdominal breaths.
11. Do a moderate amount of exercise on a daily basis. Stretch before and after all exercise.
12. It is also important to remember that emotions, thoughts and habits have an effect on your body chemistry as well. Rest, relaxation, exercise, oxygen, pleasure, laughter and love all assist in helping the body become more alkaline. Emotions such as worry, fear, anger, resentment and the feeling of a lack of love have an acidic effect.

For most people it is not necessary, or advisable for them to use supplements or products to balance the pH of the body. Identify what you are doing or not doing, consuming or thinking that is increasing the acidic level in the body and change that. When you provide the body with the right building blocks it knows how to bring itself to balance.