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## The Truth about Antacids

### Protecting Yourself from Products that Do Away with Stomach Acid

#### Part One

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**T**he Chinese have a saying: “Death begins in the gut.” Now that Prilosec® is available over-the-counter, millions of people have self-medicated with this potent drug for weeks, months, even years. Antacids line the shelves in millions of medicine cabinets. They rattle around in purses, pockets, glove compartments, desk drawers and kitchen cabinets. People use them because they’ve been misled to believe that producing stomach acid is a disease and antacids are the cure.

The truth is, long-term use of Prilosec® and similar drugs is harmful to your health. To understand the dangers of long-term Prilosec® use, it is helpful to understand the function of a healthy digestive system.

#### How We Take in Food and Why it Matters

The digestive tract begins the incredible assignment of converting food into energy, while protecting our sterile, internal body from the bacteria, fungus, disease and toxins we ingest. What you

take into your body and how it enters your system profoundly affects the course of your health.

The process begins even before you sit down to eat (you are going to eat sitting down, aren’t you?). You think about the potato that’s baking in the oven and your digestive juices stir. As you chew and swallow the first luscious bite, your saliva glands secrete enzymes that begin to digest certain foods. Remember, if you don’t chew enough, the food isn’t mixed with the enzymes and the food particles are too large to be properly digested.

As you swallow, that morsel pulses through your esophagus and into your stomach. The stomach churns the food in acids to further break down the chemical bonds unaffected by saliva. While you wash the dishes, your stomach continues this churning and acid bathing process. Gradually, as you’re settling into a good book, the food is reduced to a warm, pasty substance called chyme and is pushed into the small intestine.

Enzymes from the intestine and other organs (notably the pancreas) contribute to breaking down the chyme so the small intestine can absorb all the vitamins, minerals and nutrients that potato has to offer. The large intestine gets the undigested chyme, toxins and waste, absorbs the water and prepares for excretion.

Taking antacids interfere with the digestive process by suppressing, neutralizing and control-

ling gastric acidity. In fact, interfering with any part of digestion thwarts the conversion of food into energy. The body then becomes malnourished and more toxic, which disrupts all our functioning, from creating a hormone to flexing a muscle.

### **Good Flora, Bad Flora**

Amazingly, the surface area of the gut is roughly the size of a football field, and is covered with delicate, hard-working bacteria (microflora) that are easily disturbed by unhealthy foods, toxins, antibiotics and contaminants. In fact, a healthy gut has more good bacteria than there are cells in the entire human body. This expanse of hundreds of species of flora keeps us healthy as they:

- Produce natural antibiotics that kill pathogens (disease-causing flora)
- Crowd out pathogens—there is no room for pathogens when the healthy flora flourish
- Produce half our vitamins B6 and B12
- Aid in food absorption and digestion
- Boost the immune system—these good bacteria comprise 40% of our immune system
- Maintain the lining of the intestinal wall.

Good bacteria help to produce new cells to rebuild the intestinal wall

Many on-going digestive issues are due to depleted microflora in the intestines. Gut flora become depleted from taking antibiotics or from exposure to antibiotics in foods. According to the non-profit organization, Environmental Defense, an astonishing 70% of all antibiotics and related drugs in this country are fed to chickens, cows and pigs.

Other medications, such as Prilosec®, Tagamet®, or Nexium® can upset the pH balance, which contributes to the depletion of good bacteria.

When these good bacteria are diminished, we experience dysbiosis, an imbalance of intestinal flora. Pathogens can grow out of control, destroying necessary enzymes and interfering with proper digestion and the health of the “skin” that lines the digestive tract.

The toxins from pathogenic organisms erode the stomach and gut linings. Many foods such as dairy products irritate the lining of the gut. Most people have some degree of intestinal erosion due

to dairy products, medications, past infections and antibiotics, toxins accumulated from food and water, dysbiosis, and food allergies. We absorb toxins leading to a more chronic condition called auto-intoxication—an accumulation of poisons in our other organs. Auto-intoxication leads to a multitude of systemic diseases.

Eating dairy products along with dysbiosis underlay:

- Indigestion with gas and bloating
- Diarrhea alternating with constipation
- GI bleeding
- Acid reflux—heartburn, Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)
- Peptic ulcers
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Crohn’s disease (an inflammatory bowel disease)
- Diverticulitis
- Ulcerative colitis—Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD)
- Celiac Sprue—intolerance to gluten, which can result in chronic diarrhea, weight loss, and vitamin deficiency
- Allergies
- All autoimmune diseases
- Fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome
- Depression and other brain dysfunctions
- Many forms of cancer

For Americans, the gastrointestinal tract is a common denominator for many other diseases and health issues. It’s hard to stay healthy when our gut is compromised by poor diet and nutrition, lack of exercise, and the ingestion of antacids and other drugs.

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