

# The HCL Challenge



Got acid reflux – wondering if it's low vs excess acid – this is the test for you!

Feeling like food is hanging around in your stomach a bit too long causing bloating or the sensation of a “food baby”? This test will let you know if you're making enough hydrochloric acid aka HCl to digest your food.

Note:(Please do not attempt this if you have an ulcer or current gastritis or if you suspect that you do.)

## **HCl Challenge Steps:**

1. Purchase a supplement containing HCl – [HCl Guard by Healthy Gut](#) or Thorne [Betaine HCl + Pepsin](#) (Note: This challenge is adapted from the Healthy Gut Company's version).
2. Take one capsule with a meal that has a minimum of 10 grams of protein or more in it (Ex: ½ cup Greek Yogurt, 2 eggs, ½ cup cottage cheese, ½ can of tuna).
3. Wait 10–15 minutes and see if you notice any burning or irritation in your stomach. If you do not feel anything then you have low stomach acid.
4. If you feel heat, slight burn, pain, or have a loose bowel movement after taking one capsule of HCl then you have sufficient stomach acid. Don't worry – you can take 1 teaspoon of baking soda in a small amount of water and drink it to neutralize the acid and alleviate your discomfort. In rare cases, you may need to do it again 15 min later. At this point you have your answer no need to continue.
5. If your symptoms improved or you didn't feel any pain, then you could benefit from stomach acid support and you can proceed to find the perfect dose for your body.

## **Finding the Perfect Stomach Support Dosage:**

Everyone's stomach is different when it comes to it's capacity for creating acid. Thus, it's key to figure out your specific dosage.

The day after your 1st challenge it's time to test the following:

- Take 2 capsules with each meal that contains 10+ grams of protein and see how your stomach feels. If no burn with 2 capsules at each meal move to 3 per meal the next day. If you get a slight burn, pain or discomfort you've reached your max HCl dosage. Back down by one capsule per meal and there's your per meal dosage.
- If no burn with 3 capsules at each meal - keep going 4, 5, or 6 capsules per 10+ gram protein-based meal and find out what dosage is best for you
- To be clear here's an example... you took 5 capsules and feel a heat/burn/loose stools - then your ideal dosage is 4 per meal. Start that the next meal that contains protein.
- The goal is to find the perfect dosage for your digestive system.
- Your stomach is built to handle massive amounts of acid - it will be okay if you have a burn or pain. You haven't harmed yourself - use the baking soda to neutralize the acid and take it easy. Use 1 teaspoon of baking soda in a few ounces of water and drink it. You can repeat the baking soda drink if needed. Most people will end up taking between 2-6 HCl capsules per meal.

### **Advanced Questions About HCL Testing**

- You do not have to find the "Burning feeling" from the HCL challenge to stop increasing the dosage. Approximately 30% of people do not feel a burn. If you fall into this group, use your energy and bowel movement qualities as your guide. Do not use more than 6 capsules per meal.
- Take note - HCl supplements are not replacements for digestive enzymes. They work together.

### **How Do I Know It's Working?**

Most people report some of the following effects 1-3 weeks.

- Improvement in stool quality and ease of bowel movements
- Decreased pain with bowel movements
- Improvement in the consistency of bowel movements (like going every day)
- Less burping, bloating and gas
- Improvement in energy and mood
- Reduction in feeling heavy or a "food baby" after eating