

# Vibrant Longevity and pH

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Perhaps for the many who experience aging as a time of infirmity, weakness, suffering, and loneliness, it is safe to say that aging is a very unpleasant experience. But for those who find aging to be a process of gaining wisdom, insight, and an increased capacity to experience joy, gratitude, and love, aging is most certainly a highly prized possession and a time to look forward to eagerly. A time of vibrant longevity. If we can understand the importance of the pH of our bodies, we can understand much of the biochemical source of illness and aging. If we can understand the source of illness and aging, we just might find the concept of vibrant longevity a very appealing idea in deed.

The human body works optimally with a slightly alkaline pH (remember, a pH of 7.0 is neutral, under 7.0 is acid and over 7.0 is alkaline). If this pH number begins to drop toward the acid side (as it will with acid-forming food choices), the body takes action to neutralize it. This action is called buffering. The buffering of pH is a compensatory action that the body takes to make up for acidification, and it requires systemic resources that are intended for other uses. For example, the minerals stored in the bones are very alkaline in pH. These minerals are intended to make the bones strong and healthy, but as a compensatory action, they will be drawn from the bone into the blood stream to neutralize the acid pH.<sup>1</sup>

In fact the body has many compensatory systems or processes. And if they are used occasionally, these back-up systems work very well. If they are used every day and all day long, over the passage of years, the back-up systems begin to show the consequences of over use or to fail altogether. In our example, the bones will become demineralized and weak.

In addition to depleting buffering systems, there are other consequences to chronic acidosis. We all know that pouring acid on something causes it to burn. Chronic, low-level acidosis is not so much different. In the condition of an acid pH, your body's internal environment is essentially being bathed in an acid bath. Remember, this is a subtle, low-level acid bath, so it will not kill you or even make you sick tomorrow. But over time, that on-going burning causes tissues to become inflamed. Inflammation is a natural immune process that normally results in healing. But again, the immune system is not intended act on tissue all day every day. If the acid bath continues day after day, (as in the case of eating an acid-forming diet) over time, the immune system can also become depleted or confused. And let's not forget, another description for chronic inflammation is chronic pain.

As time passes, the inflamed tissues can begin to break down. This breakdown might affect the connective tissues of the joints, causing joint pain. It might affect the collagen matrix of skin, causing thinning of skin and what we call aging. It might affect the muscles, causing muscle wasting. It might affect the capillaries, causing varicose veins, hemorrhoids, or bleeding gums.

As you may have guessed by now, a chronically acid pH is also associated with osteoporosis, kidney disease, gallbladder disease, heart disease, arthritis, cancer, viral and bacterial infections. In general, chronic health problems are almost always associated with an acid pH.

By now, we're all thinking, "I want an alkaline pH. How do I get one?" This is the tricky part because much of the Standard American Diet results in the acidification of body pH. Sugar, coffee, alcohol, white

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. Potassium. In: *Dietary Reference Intakes for Water, Potassium, Sodium, Chloride, and Sulfate*. Washington DC: National Academies Press: 1994: 186-268.

flour, and red meat top the list of those acidifiers. So if you're among those who woke up this morning, had a cup of coffee and a bowl of cereal for breakfast, then grabbed a hamburger at the drive-through for lunch, and later topped off the day with a plate of pasta, a glass of wine, and piece of pie for dessert, you can safely guess that your body pH is tending toward the acid side of the equation.

The good news is that body pH responds equally well to an alkaline diet. Food choices such as moderately limiting protein and increasing whole fruits and vegetables, and especially foods high in potassium such as potatoes, lima beans, bananas, acorn squash, sunflower seeds, almonds, avocados, and beet greens to name a few, will raise pH. Vibrant longevity, here we come!

Of course, the first and perhaps most important strategy for raising pH is the elimination of the common acidifiers mentioned above. In my clinical practice where I have monitored client pH for many years, I have seen that the most effective strategy for improving pH is the self-knowledge that comes from tracking food choice and pH fluctuations. In other words, each individual's pH will respond quite uniquely to food choices. It is best to monitor your own pH by measuring saliva and urine with pH paper over some days or even weeks to learn which food choices most affect your level. It is common that one person will be able to tolerate the occasional chocolate chip cookie without negative effect on their pH level, while another person will become very acid and stay that way for several days after that same cookie.

If you would like to read more about the scientific research that has been conducted on this topic in recent years, please do look up Minich and Bland's recent literature review article, "Acid-Alkaline Balance: Role in Chronic Disease and Detoxification."<sup>2</sup> Or drop me a note and I'll send you a copy.

In the meantime, here is a menu to show what might be included in an alkaline-producing diet. Recipes for \* items are at [www.SherryDell.com](http://www.SherryDell.com) (click on Holistic Nutrition).

Be forewarned. The menus that follow here will alkalinize your pH. This means that they are very different from the standard American diet. If you have been eating the standard American diet for a long time, they may seem completely crazy to you. Try hard not to throw the baby out with the bath water. Even if you just add some of these items occasionally, your pH level will benefit. And even a small improvement in pH can make you feel better.

#### Breakfast

- Grapefruit, or papaya, or melon, or berries, followed 20 minutes later by 2 poached eggs with 1 slices whole grain toast and butter

or

- Green Chili Tofu\* served with green beans or snap peas

or

- Whole grain cereal\*

#### Lunch

- Very Good Green Salad\*

or

- Vegetable soup\* and rye crackers

or

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<sup>2</sup> Minich, D.M. and Bland, J.S. Acid-Alkaline Balance: Role in Chronic Disease and Detoxification. *Alternative Therapies*, Jul/Aug 2007, Vol 13, No.4.

- Raw vegetables (carrots, celery, snap peas, green onions, etc.) and humus with rye crackers

#### Dinner

- Vegetarian tacos\*

or

- Steamed broccoli, cauliflower and carrots with broiled white fish

or

- Steamed corn on the cob, new baby potatoes, and green beans with Vegetable Quiche\*

#### Snacks

- Apple
- Apple juice
- Apple energy drink\*
- Pumpkin tofu pie\*
- Gingerbread tofu cookie\*
- Almonds
- Raisins