Betaine hydrochloride is also known as hydrochloric acid (HCl) or stomach acid. It helps digest food by breaking up fats and proteins. The low pH of the stomach’s hydrochloric acid also destroys ingested bacteria and other microorganisms. Adequate levels of HCl are necessary for adequate absorption of protein, calcium, vitamin B12 and iron.

Healthy stomach acid is needed for a healthy digestive tract. If you have low stomach acid, even the best food cannot be properly digested. If you are unable to absorb nutrients properly, this can lead to terrible health problems. Healthy stomach acid helps kill disease-causing microbes and parasites routinely found in food you eat. If you have low stomach acid, these infecting invaders may not be destroyed by your stomach’s acid bath. They can then cause many types of infections. Now you can see why low stomach acid (hypochlorhydria) is associated with so many common health problems. If these infections are not cleared, over time they can cause many symptoms, paving the way for full-blown diseases. (See charts below.)

**Common Symptoms Of Low Hydrochloric Acid**

- Bloating or belching, especially after eating
- Burning in the stomach, especially after eating
- Fullness or heaviness in the stomach after eating
- Nausea after eating or taking supplements
- Intestinal gas
- Indigestion
- Bad breath
- Food allergies
- Itching around the rectum
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Weak or cracked fingernails
- Dilated blood vessels in the cheeks or nose (in nonalcoholics)
- Skin break-outs or acne
- Iron deficiency
- Chronic intestinal parasites
- Undigested food in the stool
- Chronic candida infection

**Dysbiosis** (overgrowth of unhealthy intestinal bacteria)

**Diseases Associated With Low Hydrochloric Acid**

- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Arthritis
- Hepatitis
- Eczema
- Acne rosacea
- Psoriasis
- Gallbladder disease
- Herpes
- Hives
- Hyperthyroid
- Hypothyroid
- Thyrotoxicosis
- Autoimmune disorders
- Lupus erythematosus
- Myasthenia gravis
- Pernicious anemia
- Celiac disease
- Sjogren’s Syndrome
Are You Confused?
Are you confused about pH? A healthy acid/alkaline balance of your body is the key to great health. When your body is functioning in top form, the digestive tract alternates back and forth between an alkaline and acid pH. Digestion starts in the mouth (which works optimally at an alkaline pH). Moving downwards, digestion in the stomach requires an acid pH. Next, the small intestines need an alkaline pH. Finally the large intestine works best in a slightly acid pH.

If any segment fails to keep its proper pH, then the segment before or after it can begin to malfunction. For example, the stomach works best at a low acid pH. If the stomach can’t produce enough stomach acid, then it becomes too alkaline. This in turn, can cause the small intestines (which should be alkaline) to become too acid.

Low Stomach Acid
For many people, as they get older, the parietal cells in the stomach lining produce less and less hydrochloric acid. This is especially true of those who eat: 1) heavily cooked foods (which have no live enzymes), 2) difficult-to-digest foods such as red meat or fried foods, 3) chemicalized foods, such as those containing artificial preservatives and additives, 4) soft drinks, which contain high amounts of phosphorus, white sugar, and immune-stressing chemicals and 5) barbequed foods, which cause high digestive stress. (The blackened areas of the food contain carcinogenic [cancer-causing] agents.)

People Over Age 60
Over 50% of the people over age 60 have low stomach acid. By age 85, 80% have low stomach acid. These are shocking statistics. Healthy stomach acid is crucial to digest food properly in order to maintain good health. Hydrochloric acid is one of your body’s first line defenses against disease-causing microbes. Weak stomach acid allows infecting organisms (that would normally be killed by the acid) to get past the stomach and set up infections in other areas. They can cause food poisoning and dysbiosis of the intestinal tract (abnormal overgrowth of unhealthy intestinal microbes).

For people aged 60 to 80, over 20% have bacterial overgrowth in the intestines. Over age 80, the percentage increases to 40%. This abnormal bacterial overgrowth is also common in younger people. It is linked to low stomach acid as well as eating a nutrient-poor diet, using antibiotics or pain killers, drinking excess alcohol and other factors. Thus, healthy stomach acid is a critical part of maintaining healthy intestines.

Getting The Minerals and Vitamins In
Adequate hydrochloric acid is necessary to absorb vitamin B12. B12 deficiency can cause muscle weakness, fatigue and many nervous system problems. Healthy stomach acid is also required to absorb many minerals, including iron, calcium, magnesium, zinc, copper and most B-complex vitamins. Those with poor stomach acid typically have low vitamin C levels.

Exhausted Stomach Acid
Adequate amounts of stomach acid are necessary to break down protein. That’s why overeating meat, especially cooked red meat, is hard on the stomach -- it uses up the stomach’s acids and enzymes very quickly. Eating red meat day after day can exhaust the stomach’s ability to build up sufficient amounts of hydrochloric acid. Your best bet is to limit or eliminate red meat in your diet. Instead, enjoy an excellent, high quality protein source -- edible mushrooms!

Shiitake Fillet
Reinvigorate your digestion by choosing easy-to-digest protein sources. Enjoy high quality protein from mushrooms such as fresh, grade 10 shiitake or maitake. They are easy to prepare and cook, absolutely delicious and contain natural immune-boosting factors that improve your energy levels and vitality. In contrast, red meat is difficult to digest and contains arachidonic acid which encourages inflammatory by-products which can lead to joint pain, fatigue and osteoporosis.

Acid Stomach
Low stomach acid can cause indigestion. Believe or not, too little stomach acid is the most common cause of an acid stomach, not excess acid. Some people take antacids to relieve the uncomfortable acid feeling in their stomachs (common after eating high protein or high fat meals). But the vast majority of those with an “acid stomach” suffer from not enough acid. They simply can’t digest what they’ve eaten. For some, an antacid may temporarily relieve a queasy stomach, but in the long run, regular use of antacids makes the problem worse.

Conquering The Queasy Stomach
If you suffer from an acid stomach, avoid high protein meals, especially red meat. Instead of antacids, begin taking quality digestive enzymes at the end of each large meal, whether you have pain or not. [Do not take hydrochloric acid if you have an ulcer.]

Be sure you have adequate daily salt intake (from natural sea salt). The chloride fraction in salt is essential for your body to make hydrochloric acid. That’s why a low-salt diet commonly leads to poor digestion over time.

9 Steps To Super Digestion
To ensure a healthy digestive tract, adopt the following healthy habits:
1) Eat a diet rich in grade 10, fresh vegetables (an excellent form of healthy fiber).
2) Eat grade 10 whole starchy foods daily, such as grade 10 brown rice and buckwheat (also excellent healthy fiber).
3) Use healthy, pink sea salt daily, added to your food.
4) Limit or eliminate your red meat consumption.
5) Enjoy high-protein, edible mushrooms, such as easy-to-digest, delicious grade 10 shiitake and maitake.
6) Do not eat meals past 7 P.M.
7) Take premier quality betaine HCL at the end of each main meal with cooked food.
8) Take adequate amounts of state-of-the-art super-nutrients, including Sango marine coral minerals (rich in ionized calcium and other minerals), U.S.P. grade cod liver oil (rich in vitamin D and brain nutrients), and high quality antioxidants (potent protectors against free radical damage from pollutants).
9) Go on a one-month cleansing program by taking daily doses of two top grade 10 super-greens: sun-grown chlorella and premier quality coriander leaf powder. These can help dramatically chelate out toxic heavy metals and other undesirable contaminants that hinder and congest your digestive tract.

References
Price, W., Diet and Physical Degeneration, Keats Publ, New Cannan, CT, first publ. 1938.