

Acid/Alkaline, Calcium, Sweet Cravings, and Healing Diet

Carl Ferré

ACID/ALKALINE BALANCE

With your knowledge of macro-biotics, is the book Acid and Alkaline the best and most easily comprehended book that you are aware of concerning the acid/alkaline balance in the body? If so, what is the price and does your organization carry this book? If not, please recommend an acid/alkaline book as I have a friend whose body is tremendously out of balance. Also, where do I find recipes for overcoming the acid/alkaline imbalance? Thanks,

— E.Z.
via email

Today, many people are beginning to realize the dangers of an over acidic condition. Hard to believe that Herman Aihara wrote the first edition of *Acid and Alkaline* over thirty years ago in 1971. Part of the reason more is being said about acid alkaline balance is that people have figured out how to profit from it.

Basically, the modern typical diet of meat and sugar is very acid forming. Two of the major alkaline-forming elements in the body are sodium and calcium and since people are cutting down on sodium due to the belief that it causes heart problems, that leaves calcium as one of the main counter balances. Vegetables are alkaline-forming and thus of some help, but most people don't or can't eat enough to fully balance an excessive

meat and sugar intake. Thus, the daily recommended requirement of calcium has gone up considerably over the past thirty years.

The dairy industry readily points out that milk contains calcium and many people drink it believing it is healthy for them. However, the overall effect of milk is acid-forming. What's a person to do? Enter the alkaline-forming products such as coral calcium and various alkalizing drinks. There are also machines that are reported to make water more alkaline and more digestible.

Herman received one of the earliest models of a device that reportedly separated the water into acid water and alkaline water. He was instructed to drink the alkaline water and use the acid water in the garden or to wash the dishes. We used it for a few days with no noticeable results in increased energy, etc. I asked Herman if we could experiment with it a little. We then took a pitcher of water and poured it through the machine. It divided the water equally into alkaline water and acid water. We then took the alkaline water and poured it through the machine. It divided the water equally into alkaline water and acid water. We tried the acid water with the same result - equal amounts of acid and alkaline water! We sent the machine back. I understand that improvements have been made over the years and that the machines now available are better.

There is nothing wrong with using one of the calcium or alkalizing drinks

for a short-term turn around due to an extreme condition. However, the macrobiotic approach is to stop the cause—an over-acidic meat and sugar diet. This would seem like common sense, but it doesn't sell the special products, keep the doctors busy, and let's face it, the reality is most people don't want to change their diet.

To specifically answer your questions, we are the publishers of *Acid and Alkaline* and do sell it for \$8.95 plus shipping. Even though the latest edition is 1986 and some of the chemistry terminology has changed, it is still one of the best books to understand the need for acid alkaline balance and how to accomplish it in one's body. The chemistry (first three chapters) can be skipped if one has a hard time with it.

Another excellent book that has a chapter on acid and alkaline is *Food and Healing* by Annemarie Colbin (\$14.95). There is much more useful information in this book in addition to acid alkaline balance. Verne Varona has an excellent chapter on acid and alkaline in his newer book, *Nature's Cancer Fighting Foods* (\$16.95). The Foundation sells all these books. Books that I've heard discuss acid and alkaline but have not read yet are *The PH Factor* by Dr. Robert O. Young, *Alkalize or Die* by Theodore Baroody, N.D., D.C., and *Death By Diet* by Bob Bearfoot.

Several people have suggested that we produce a cookbook of alkalizing recipes and we might do this some

day. In the meantime, all one has to do is to read *Acid and Alkaline* and follow Table 20 on pages 90 and 91. It is important to remember that both acid and alkaline are necessary for health. Thus, overdoing alkaline-forming food such as consuming large amount of coral calcium over a period of time can have dangerous effects. As Ohsawa would say, "every front has a back, the bigger the front the bigger the back."

A thorough reading of *Acid and Alkaline* should give one the knowledge needed to cook good balanced meals both with respect to yin and yang or acid and alkaline. Also, see David Briscoe's article, *Easy Alkalinity*, in the September/October 2002 issue of *Macrobiotica Today*. In addition, my book, *Pocket Guide to Macrobiotica*, contains a brief summary of acid and alkaline and the basics of producing balanced meals using macrobiotic principles. I hope this is helpful.

CALCIUM SOURCES

May I ask a question? How does a woman (myself) in her late 40's, done with menopause (no hormone therapy), get calcium from the macrobiotic diet? I don't tolerate milk products well. I have been using a calcium supplement. Also, I don't like meat, and I suffer from anemia quite often. Any suggestions?

— Lu
via the Internet

First, see the preceding question on acid/alkaline balance as the answer contains some information on calcium and part of the need for it. Also, see David Briscoe's article on Osteoporosis in this issue. Here is information from my book, *Pocket Guide to Macrobiotica*.

"A basic macrobiotic diet includes many excellent sources of calcium. Leafy green vegetables such as broccoli, collard greens, kale, and turnip greens are particularly high in cal-

cium. Sea vegetables, soybeans, and soy products also are good sources. Sesame seeds are very high in calcium, making gomashio (ground sesame seeds and salt) an excellent source. Small dried fish (iriko) are a good choice for people who wish to get a large amount of calcium from one source."

Sea vegetables, sesame seeds, and leafy green vegetables also are sources of iron, which might be helpful for the anemia. Also, chewing your food very well (100 times per mouthful or more), especially the whole grains, is helpful for anemia. Avoid foods that contain oxalic acid such as spinach, Swiss chard, and beet greens, and any food with additives as these hinder iron absorption. Miso soup and rice bran pickles every day are recommended, especially when the anemia is acting up.

Of course these are general suggestions and there are many reasons for anemia. If the condition persists you may wish to check with a macrobiotic counselor or other health care provider.

CRAVING SWEETS

I have another question for your Questions and Answers column. Bragg Liquid Aminos looks like soy sauce but to me tastes a lot better. Made of soybeans and water only, it seems to satisfy my cravings for salt. How come? What is your opinion about Bragg's quality and replacement for shoyu or tamari? I eat seaweed daily, so I get minerals from that.

As for cravings for sweets, I eat seasonal foods out of my garden, no pressure cooking, and rarely (ten to twenty times a year) some fish. A pound of salt lasts me a couple of years; however, I do eat seaweed daily. Mostly I use short-time cooking, except in winter when I cook stews and soups for a long time on my woodstove. I have practiced macrobiotica for thirty-five years; however, I still

crave sugar, mainly in the form of tropical dried fruit papaya, dates, ginger candied, plus raisins, and lots of seasonal fruit. I still enjoy marihuana moderately (one to two times weekly) as well. How do you explain that?

My lifestyle is very active physically outdoors and I'm exposed to heat as well as cold, depending on the seasons. I'm female, single (no yin from a man), and 65 years of age, although my biological age is 42. Please enlighten me.

I must be doing something right as my energy level is very good and I usually feel good. I hope to get an answer to my questions from you as you are the best source I know. Thank you very much in advance. I sure appreciate your efforts to keep Macrobiotica Today going. Peace and Love,

— Y.L.
Arkansas

The main concern with any soybean product these days is the prevalent use of Roundup Ready Soybeans. Rebecca Wood's excellent book, *The New Whole Foods Encyclopedia* contains a caution regarding GMOs (genetically manipulated organisms).

We have a bottle of Bragg Liquid Aminos that was given to us by a friend although we haven't experimented with it much yet. The statement "certified non-GMO" is on the bottle and the quality appears to be very good.

However the bottle also says that the soybeans are not fermented. Rebecca Wood also points out in her book, "If merely boiled, soybeans inhibit the digestive enzyme trypsin; they are a bear to digest. Asian cuisines have devised numerous healthful methods to tame this bean into an easily digested food. I do not recommend hard-to-digest Western soy products, which have not had the trypsin inhibitor removed."

Still, if you have no digestive problems, occasional use as a flavoring for special dishes should be

okay. For more frequent use, shoyu or tamari, would appear to be the better choice. Note that wheat-free tamari is available for those who have problems with wheat. Perhaps you could check www.bragg.com to see if they have removed the trypsin inhibitor.

The cravings questions are quite another story and can only be discussed in a general way. First, you must be very intuitive if you can tell that it is the liquid aminos that are satisfying your salt cravings and not the minerals from the seaweed. It is my understanding that one's need for salt diminishes as one gets older and perhaps this is also part of the equation.

From what you write it doesn't appear that your cravings for sugar are that extreme. Having no experience with marijuana, I don't know the effect first-hand but the macrobiotic literature places it beyond sugar on the yang-to-yin scale. So, there appears to be some need for yin sweetness in your life. Perhaps this comes from an emotional need, from a yang constitution, or something from childhood or even before birth.

If you are as happy and as together as your penmanship indicates, why would you want to change anything? Be happy and carry on. If you want to experiment, try finding a sweet man (very difficult these days I'm told), developing a very deep friendship with a man or woman (non-macrobiotic preferred), or becoming more involved with infants – there's nothing quite like holding a baby to satisfy an emotional craving for sweetness.

HEALING DIET?

Can you please explain what exactly is a "healing diet." Must a person have a specific illness/condition with which they are dealing or can a "healing diet" be used by someone who is trying to make the transition from the typical American diet to the macrobiotic way of life? Can you expound on "discharge" – what it is, why it happens, what can be expected,

etc? How can macrobiotics be used to treat obesity/overweight, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol (like most of America)? Any tips?

– D.K.
via email

Although I used "centering diet" instead of "healing diet," here is a quote from my book *Pocket Guide to Macrobiotics*.

"A macrobiotic centering diet is a restricted basic macrobiotic diet, eating and drinking only what is necessary for one's life, and toward the center of yin and yang balance. This means eating primarily whole grains, vegetables, beans, and sea vegetables. Sea salt either by itself or in miso, soy sauce, umeboshi, or gomashio, and liquid, usually bancha tea (kukicha), are also needed. Everything else is kept to a minimum or avoided altogether. This approach allows the body's natural healing power to heal from within."

The book contains specific proportions and useful suggestions. While one could use a "centering diet" or "healing diet" as a transition, I would not recommend it unless a specific illness or condition required it. And, as I say in the book, "once a person is well it is important to widen the diet to include a greater variety of foods." In fact, I recommend eating the greatest variety of foods that one's condition allows. This allows one to avoid becoming bored with their diet, to have greater flexibility in narrowing the diet if and when the need arises, and to enjoy eating out with friends without excessive worry.

Literally, discharge means to relieve oneself of a burden or load. A typical modern diet of meat and sugar contains many excess toxins that get stored in the body and eventually cause sickness. When one changes to a macrobiotic diet with fewer or no excess toxins, the body has the chance to clean out some (or all) of these stored toxins. Here's another quote from *Pocket Guide to Macrobiotics*

that describes part of the discharge process.

"The usual order is from yang to yin, or more specifically in the following order: meat, cheese, excessive fruit, dairy, alcohol, refined sugar, and drugs. It's clear what is being discharged because cravings, sometimes intense cravings, accompany the elimination. The discharge process may last days, weeks, or longer. Discharges vary greatly from intense, dramatic events to slower, more tame affairs depending on the substances being discharged, the severity of the imbalance, and the length of time the body has been unbalanced. Still, one should expect some level of temporary discomfort. It almost always involves some pain, usually beginning in the neck and traveling downward through the body to the fingertips and toes and upward to the top of the head. Pain will be felt also in any weak or malfunctioning organs. A person undergoing a discharge may appear quite sick, but is often happy, especially if they understand the healing power."

Again, there is more in the book on the discharge process and on healing in general. Basically, macrobiotics doesn't treat diseases in the normal sense of the term. Rather, by returning to a natural diet based on whole grains and fresh vegetables, the body is allowed to return to a natural healthy condition. There are specific dietary guidelines and home remedies that can be helpful in relieving any of the conditions you mention.

Since the two best books on the subject, *Natural Healing from Head to Toe* by Cornellia and Herman Aihara and *Macrobiotic Home Remedies* by Michio Kushi, are currently out of print, a macrobiotic counselor can be invaluable in helping one determine the best course of action.

Carl Ferre is the author of Pocket Guide to Macrobiotics and editor of Macrobiotics Today.