Disorders of the Stomach

As already mentioned, gallstones and subsequent digestive difficulties can lead to regurgitation of bile acids and bile salts into the stomach. Such an occurrence adversely changes the composition and amount of mucous generated in the stomach. The mucous is there to protect the surface lining of the stomach from the destructive effects of hydrochloric acid. The condition where this protective 'shield' is broken or diminished is known as *gastritis*.

Gastritis can occur in acute or chronic form. When the surface cells (epithelium) of the stomach are exposed to acid gastric juice, the cells absorb hydrogen ions. This increases their internal acidity, counterbalances their basic metabolic processes and causes an inflammatory reaction. In more severe cases there may be ulceration of the mucosa (*peptic or gastric ulcer*), bleeding, perforation of the stomach wall and *peritonitis*, a condition that occurs when an ulcer erodes through the full thickness of the stomach or duodenum and their contents enter the peritoneal cavity. *Duodenal ulcers* develop when acid leaving the stomach erodes the duodenum's lining. In many cases, the acid production is unusually high. Eating too many foods that require strong acid secretions, as well as inadequate food combining (for more details, see *Timeless Secrets of Health & Rejuvenation*, often disturb balanced acid production. *Esophageal* reflux, commonly known as 'heartburn,' is a condition in which stomach acid washes back into the esophagus and causes irritation of the tissues lining the esophagus.

There are a number of other causes of gastritis and heartburn. They include overeating, excessive alcohol consumption, heavy cigarette smoking, drinking coffee every day, eating large quantities of animal protein and animal fats, X-radiation, cytotoxic drugs, aspirin and other anti-inflammatory drugs, food poisoning, very spicy foods, dehydration, emotional stress, etc. All of these also cause gallstones in the liver and gallbladder, opening up a vicious circle and further adding complications throughout the gastro-intestinal tract. Ultimately, malignant *stomach tumors* may be formed.

Most medical doctors now believe that a 'bug' causes stomach ulcers. Combating the bug with antibiotic drugs usually brings relief and stops the ulcer. Although the drug does not guarantee that the ulcer returns after discontinuing the drug, there is a high 'recovery' rate. But such recoveries are often accompanied by side effects.

The infection by these bugs is only possible because there already is damaged cell tissue in the stomach. In a healthy stomach, the same bug turns out to be totally harmless. As mentioned before, gallstones in the liver and gallbladder can lead to regular back flushing of bile into the stomach, which causes damage to an increasing number of stomach cells. Antibiotics destroy the natural stomach flora, including bacteria that normally help break down damaged cells. So although the antibiotic approach results in a quick relief of symptoms, it also lowers stomach performance permanently, which sets up the body for more severe challenges than just dealing with an ulcer. Shortcuts to healing rarely pay off. On the other hand, most stomach disorders disappear spontaneously when all existing gallstones are removed, and a healthy diet and balanced lifestyle are regularly maintained.