



## Apple Cider Vinegar for Heartburn: Does It Work or Make It Worse?

By: Abby Moore | September 30, 2020

Apple cider vinegar (ACV) plays a versatile role in many people's wellness routines. It's a popular tool for relieving foot odor, easing dandruff, and balancing the skin's pH, just to name a few uses.

And, while it may seem counterintuitive, some suggest apple cider vinegar may also help soothe heartburn symptoms. If so, that's great news to the 60 million Americans who experience the gastrointestinal issue (GI) at least once a month.

However, if you're skeptical about this tactic, you're not alone. Putting more acid into the body when you're suffering from reflux and heartburn can seem counterproductive (and potentially painful). We're here to get to the bottom of this supposed natural remedy.

Can ACV help prevent heartburn?

For a little refresher, heartburn occurs when acid from the stomach makes its way back into the esophagus. "Normally when you swallow, a band of muscle around the bottom of your esophagus called your sphincter temporarily opens to allow flow into your stomach," naturopathic doctor Jaime Schehr, N.D., R.D., says. "If the sphincter loosens or weakens, the stomach acid can flow back up into your esophagus causing a burning feeling." In some cases, it can occur when people don't have enough acid in the stomach.

As for apple cider vinegar as a remedy, "the use of ACV to prevent heartburn depends on what the source of the heartburn is," functional medicine doctor, **Elroy Vojdani, M.D., IFMCP**, says.

For example, if someone is overproducing gastric acid and has a weak esophageal sphincter, it's likely that the acid will make its way into the throat. "So, if you introduce more acid into that environment, as comes from ACV, the heartburn is going to get worse," Vojdani says.



However, for the people who don't produce enough stomach acid, "food will get into the stomach but won't be fully broken down," doctor of clinical nutrition Brooke Scheller, DCN, M.S., CNS, writes for mbg. "This causes fermentation and gas production that feels like too much acid but is actually due to not having enough."

If someone has determined, with the help of a GI doctor, their heartburn is definitely caused by too little acid, the acids in ACV could be helpful. In fact, one thesis study found, "Although not statistically significant, ingestion of organic vinegar appeared to alleviate heartburn symptoms for some individuals, however, the effect seemed to last only for the first 60 to 75 minutes."

Why does it (maybe) work?

Apple cider vinegar with the "mother" (aka the buildup of yeast and sugars) contains acetic acid, malic acid, pectin, and enzymes. Because of the acid, Vojdani says it can help break up and digest food in the stomach, helping it empty into the small intestine, preventing backup, and, therefore, preventing heartburn. Just be sure to dilute with water, as ACV is too acidic to drink on its own.

Plus, the probiotic benefits of ACV may help balance bacteria in the gut microbiome, improving digestion and indirectly reducing heartburn, Vojdani explains.

That said, "this theory generally applies to people who have mild reflux or too little acid production," Schehr explains. "However, for most with severe or persistent gastritis or inflammation, ACV could make heartburn worse."

If it doesn't work, there are other ACV benefits to consider:

1. Good for the gut.

"Technically apple cider vinegar is not a probiotic," integrative gastroenterologist Marvin Singh, M.D., previously told mbg, "but it should be considered a probiotic food." Because it undergoes a fermentation process, ACV contains good bacteria that can help balance dysbiosis in the gut and support healthy digestion.

2. May help manage blood sugar.

Ever noticed how after you eat a carb- or sugar-heavy meal, you have a midday energy crash? That may be caused by a spike in blood sugar while eating, and a subsequent crash later on. Well, ACV may be able to help stabilize those levels.

A study published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, found people who supplemented with ACV after eating a high glycemic meal had lower post-meal blood sugar levels than those who didn't.

3. Could curb appetite.



There's no direct evidence that apple cider vinegar detoxes can lead to weight loss. However, research shows acetic acid in "the mother" can increase feelings of fullness, which curbs appetite, and may indirectly help manage weight.

Bottom line.

There's a chance ACV could help decrease your heartburn, depending on the cause. As long as you're not overproducing stomach acid, there's no real risk to trying out the potential benefits of the vinegar. If you have too much acid in the stomach, it's best to avoid ACV. Instead, Vojdani recommends other natural remedies, like marshmallow root extract, mastic gum, and probiotics. You may also want to avoid or moderate intake of acidic, spicy, or sugary foods, as well as alcohol and coffee.

Always remember, however, that new onset or ongoing symptoms of acid reflux, especially at an older age, should prompt an evaluation by a gastroenterologist as you might need an endoscopy; so, please consult with your physician.

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/apple-cider-vinegar-for-heartburn>