An extract taken from Trans 4 Mind – http://www.trans4mind.com/nutrition/pH.html for the full article.

A surprising number and variety of physical problems and diseases can be caused by the problem of foods that are acid-producing after digestion. Today the vast majority of the populace in industrialized nations suffers from problems caused by the stress of acidosis, because both modern lifestyle and diet promote acidification of the body's internal environment.

The current typical Western diet is largely composed of acid-forming foods (proteins, cereals, sugars). Alkaline-producing foods such as vegetables are eaten in much smaller quantities. Stimulants like tobacco, coffee, tea, and alcohol are also extremely acidifying. Stress, and physical activity (both insufficient or excessive amounts) also cause acidification.

Many foods are alkaline-producing by nature, but manufactured processed foods are mostly acid-producing. It is important to consume at least 60% alkaline-producing foods in our diet, in order to maintain health. We need plenty of fresh fruits and particularly vegetables (alkaline-producing) to balance our necessary protein intake (acid-producing). And we need to avoid processed, sugary or simple-carbohydrate foods, not only because they are acid-producing but also because they raise blood sugar level too quickly (high glycemic index therefore fattening); plus they tend to be nutrient-lacking and may be toxic too.

The body maintains correct pH in the blood at all costs, by homeostasis, but that is stressful for the body's systems and resources when the diet is unbalanced in terms of acid-forming foods (the residue after digestion, that is). Within cells it's a different story. Saliva and urine tests show clearly enough the changes in alkalinity or acidity that are caused by diet and lifestyle.

What is the body's pH?
Water is the most abundant compound in the human body, comprising 70% of the body. The body therefore contains a wide range of solutions, which may be more or less acid. pH (potential of Hydrogen) is a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of a solution - the ratio between positively charged ions (acid-forming) and negatively charged ions (alkaline-forming.) The pH of any solution is the measure of its hydrogen-ion concentration. The higher the pH reading, the more alkaline and oxygen rich the fluid is. The lower the pH reading, the more acidic and oxygen deprived the fluid is. The pH range is from 0 to 14, with 7.0 being neutral. Anything above 7.0 is alkaline, anything below 7.0 is considered acidic.

Human blood pH should be slightly alkaline (7.35 - 7.45). Below or above this range means symptoms and disease. If blood pH moves below 6.8 or above 7.8, cells stop functioning and the body dies. The body therefore continually strives to balance pH. When this balance is compromised many problems can occur.

An imbalanced diet high in acidic-producing foods such as animal protein, sugar, caffeine, and processed foods puts pressure on the body's regulating systems to maintain pH neutrality. The extra buffering required can deplete the body of alkaline minerals such as sodium, potassium, magnesium, and calcium, making the person prone to chronic and degenerative disease. Minerals are borrowed from vital organs and bones to buffer (neutralize) the acid and safely remove it from the body. Because of this strain, the body can suffer severe and prolonged damage--a condition that may go undetected for years.

Health problems caused by acidosis
Research shows that unless the body's pH level is slightly alkaline, the body cannot heal itself. So no matter what means you choose to take care of your health, it won't be effective until the pH level is balanced. If your body's pH is not balanced, for example, you cannot effectively assimilate vitamins, minerals and food supplements. Your body pH affects everything.

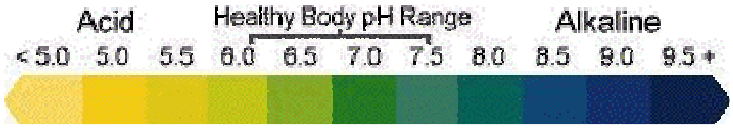
Acidosis will decrease the body's ability to absorb minerals and other nutrients, decrease the energy production in the cells, decrease it's ability to repair damaged cells, decrease it's ability to detoxify heavy metals, make tumour cells thrive, and make it more susceptible to fatigue and illness.

An acidic pH can occur from an acid-forming diet, emotional stress, toxic overload, and/or immune reactions or any process that deprives the cells of oxygen and other nutrients. The body will try to compensate for acidic pH by using alkaline minerals. If the diet does not contain enough minerals to compensate, a build up of acids in the cells will occur. Acidosis can cause such problems as:

Cardiovascular damage.
Weight gain, obesity and diabetes.
Bladder conditions.
Kidney stones.
Immune deficiency.
Acceleration of free radical damage.
Hormonal problems.
Premature aging.
Osteoporosis and joint pain.
Aching muscles and lactic acid buildup.
Low energy and chronic fatigue.

Slow digestion and elimination.
Yeast/fungal overgrowth.
Lack of energy and fatigue.
Lower body temperature.
Tendency to get infections.
Loss of drive, joy, and enthusiasm.
Depressive tendencies.
Easily stressed.
Pale complexion.
Headaches.
Inflammation of the corneas and eyelids.

Loose and painful teeth.
Inflamed, sensitive gums.
Mouth and stomach ulcers.
Cracks at the corners of the lips.
Excess stomach acid.
Gastritis.
Nails are thin and split easily.
Hair looks dull, has split ends, and falls out.
Dry skin.
Skin easily irritated.
Leg cramps and spasms.



Test Your Body's Acidity or Alkalinity with pH Strips
It is recommended that you test your pH levels to determine if your body's pH needs immediate attention. By using pH test strips (Litmus Paper), you can determine your pH factor quickly and easily in the privacy of your own home. The best time to test your pH is about one hour before a meal and two hours after a meal.

Saliva pH Test: Simply wet a piece of Litmus Paper with your saliva. While generally more acidic than blood, salivary pH mirrors the blood and tells us what the body retains. It is a fair indicator of the health of the extracellular fluids and their alkaline mineral reserves. The optimal pH for saliva is 6.4 to 6.8. A reading lower than 6.4 is indicative of insufficient alkaline reserves. After eating, the saliva pH should rise to 7.5 or more. To deviate from an ideal salivary pH for an extended time invites illness. If your saliva stays between 6.5 and 7.5 all day, your body is functioning within a healthy range.

Acidosis, an extended time in the acid pH state, can result in rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, lupus, tuberculosis, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, most cancers and many more. If salivary pH stays too low, the diet should focus on fruit, vegetables and mineral water as well as remove strong acidifiers such as sodas, whole wheat and red meat.

Understanding How an Alkaline Diet Works
Alkaline diets are a popular choice for people who want to achieve optimum good health. However, many people don't actually understand this diet or how it works. The concept is actually fairly simple - the diet just focuses on regaining the balance that was lost when man started to eat a more domesticated diet. Instead of focusing on foods that are high in sugar, simple carbohydrates (like white bread and chips) and fatty meat and dairy... an alkaline diet primarily moves the balance toward fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, wholesome protein sources such as beans and legumes, and healthy oils such as olive and flax seed.

These foods may be either alkaline or acid in their natural state, but after the process of digestion they all produce what is termed as an "alkaline ash" once digested and metabolized by the body. When the body's pH is kept at a slightly alkaline level, all the systems can work more efficiently.

Understanding the Effects of the Body's pH Level
The pH level of the body has the ability to affect every single cell of the body. When the blood has an alkaline pH instead of an acidic pH, it will have a positive effect on how every bodily system functions. The brain, circulatory system, nerves, muscles, respiratory system, digestive system, and reproductive system can all benefit from a proper pH level. On the other hand, when the pH of the body is too acidic, it is susceptible to many diseases and problems. Weight gain, heart disease, premature aging, fatigue, nerve problems, allergies, muscle disease and cancer are all more prevalent when the body's pH is not optimal. Because these problems are all more likely to occur when the body's pH is too acid, it makes good sense to eat a diet rich in alkalizing foods. The primary goal is usually to eat approximately 75-80% alkaline foods along with only about 20-25% acidifying foods. If this level is maintained in the diet, the end result is a slightly alkaline pH in the body, which is perfect for optimum good health.

Choosing Foods for an Alkaline Diet
It's actually quite easy to eat a diet rich in alkaline-producing foods. Most fresh fruits and vegetables are excellent choices. Red meat is not a good choice, but you can add plenty of protein to your meals by using soy products, delicious beans, legumes, and nuts such as almonds. You should eliminate unhealthy fats from your diet, but you can use good fats such as olive, canola, and flax seed oil. High fat dairy products should be avoided, but you can drink soy milk and goat's milk. Cheeses made from soy milk and goat's milk would also be good choices. Replace the empty calories of soda with delicious iced herb tea, green tea and lemon water. Coffee should be avoided, but you can drink hot herbal or green tea. Replace pasta with healthy whole grains such as wild rice, millet and quinoa. When sweetening your foods, focus on natural products such as raw sugar, Stevia and maple sugar. As you can see, you'll have many nutritious choices that are both delicious and high in alkalizing properties.