



The Importance of Chewing Your Food

Healthy digestion and nutrient absorption begins with the simple act of chewing your food. When you chew your food properly, your body releases digestive enzymes in the stomach that help to break down food so that your body can convert it into energy. When food isn't digested properly, you could suffer from digestive issues such as indigestion, heartburn, constipation, headache and low energy.

Why is Chewing Your Food So Important?

The physical process of chewing food in your mouth helps to break down larger particles of food into smaller particles. This helps to reduce stress on the esophagus and helps the stomach metabolize your food. When you chew each mouthful properly, you also release a lot of saliva, which contains digestive enzymes. As you release these enzymes into the throat and stomach, you further improve the digestive process. Throughout the chewing process, the body undergoes several processes that trigger digestion. Digestion is one of the most energy-consuming processes of the body, so it's essential that you help your body along by doing your part! It is especially important that processed foods be avoided by children and older adults, as they require little or no chewing—for example, eat small pieces of apple instead of applesauce.

Other Reasons to Chew Your Food Properly

- Reduce the risk of bacterial overgrowth – food particles that aren't broken down properly can cause bacterial overgrowth in the colon which leads to indigestion, bloating and constipation
- Helping food move through the digestive tract – chewing your food sends messages to the gastrointestinal system that food is on its way. This triggers hydrochloric acid production which helps speed up the digestive process.
- Relaxes the lower stomach – your lower stomach needs to relax before food can be channeled to the intestines. Releasing saliva helps to relax the lower stomach and also speeds up the digestive process.
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How Many Times Should You Chew Your Food?

The number of times you chew really depends on the type of food you consume. Soft fruits and vegetables will break down more easily than chicken or steak, so you will need to make sure you chew your food as thoroughly as possible. According to the experts at Ohio State University, you should chew softer foods 5-10 times, and more dense foods (meats/vegetables) up to 30 times before swallowing.

Other Healthy Eating Tips

In addition to chewing your food completely, there are several other ways to improve digestion and reduce the risk of constipation and bloating. You can:

Avoid drinking water or beverages while eating. Too much liquid in the stomach will slow down digestion. However, you can drink up 20-30 minutes before or after your meal to avoid dehydration the rest of the day.

Concentrate on the meal when eating: Avoid distractions such as television or eating on the run so that you are calm and focused during the meal. This also makes for a more enjoyable meal.

Make sure you're swallowing the tiniest pieces possible. If you can still feel parts of the food in your mouth, you haven't chewed it enough.