

Habits That Support Good Digestion

Eat slowly and chew your food thoroughly. This helps your food digest more efficiently and minimizes digestive stress. Chewing generates saliva that initiates starch digestion in the mouth and signals the stomach to prepare for the entry of food.



Eat in a relaxed manner. This activates the parasympathetic nervous system (PSN). The PSN supports effective digestion by increasing production of saliva and digestive enzymes, increasing mobility of the intestines, and increasing blood flow to the digestive tract.

Eat less food at meals and add small healthy snacks between meals. This keeps your digestive tract from being overloaded with large amounts of food at one time. Small amounts of food tend to digest more completely without stressing the digestive tract.

Exercise most every day. Exercise helps support a healthy functioning digestive tract. It tones the muscles in the gastrointestinal tract, increases circulation of nutrients to cells, stimulates removal of waste products from cells, and helps your bowels to move more regularly. Exercise is a great stress reducer. It enhances the health of your whole body, including your digestive system, and it increases your total sense of well-being.



Eat yogurt or take a probiotics. Yogurt and probiotics contain bacteria that are beneficial and friendly to the digestive tract. Friendly bacteria help your body fight infectious diseases and help manufacture vitamin K and several B vitamins. Yogurt and probiotics help keep a healthy balance of bacteria in your intestines.

Eat food from whole, unprocessed plant sources. Whole plant-based foods are foods that are found as close to their whole natural state as possible. These foods are a rich source of fiber and nutrients that support digestive health. Whole foods do not contain chemicals which can irritate or damage the lining of the digestive tract.



Eat some raw plant-based foods every day. They contain enzymes that aid digestion. Cooking destroys these enzymes.

Drink water! Water provides fluid needed for digestion and absorption. Limit fluid intake during meals because this dilutes stomach acid and digestive juices, which renders them less effective. Try to drink most of your water between meals.

Manage stress! When the body responds to stress, it causes the digestive system to slow down and not work as effectively and reduces blood flow to the digestive organs. Food can be left undigested in the digestive tract for many hours. This undigested food can begin to decay and produce damaging toxins in the digestive tract. Chronic stress can have a negative effect on the immune system and affect its ability to respond to injury and damage. This can impair the immune system's ability to heal tissues in the body, including tissues of the digestive tract.



Avoid eating foods that you are allergic to. The allergic reaction to foods in the digestive tract often causes inflammation to the lining of the stomach and/or intestines. Chronic inflammation of the digestive tract can cause leaky gut syndrome and irritable bowel syndrome.

Avoid using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID). NSAID are damaging to the lining for the stomach and small intestine. Frequent repetitive use of these drugs can break down the lining of the digestive tract and cause ulcers.



Avoid deep fat fried foods. Oils break down when they are exposed to high temperatures and can cause inflammation in the digestive tract.

Avoid eating sugar. Sugar has a detrimental effect on most digestive problems. For instance, simple sugars feed yeasts, bacteria and parasites. Sugar is an "empty-calorie food". It contains calories but no nutrients. Nutrients are needed to digest and metabolize sugar. Nutrients are robbed from our bodies' vitamin and mineral reserves in order to digest and metabolize sugar. Empty calories from sugar replace calories from healthy foods in our diets.



Limit or avoid alcohol intake. Alcohol can damage the lining of the intestines. Frequent ingestion of alcohol can promote the development of leaky gut syndrome.

References:

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2. Murry, Michael, Pizzorno, Joseph. (2012) *The Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine*. (Third Edition). New York, NY: Atria Paperback.