



The Pathway to Healthy Digestion

Digestive Health Wellness Guide

Getting on the Right “Tract”: The Path to Healthy Digestion

The simple act of nourishing ourselves with wholesome food should be a treasured ritual we look forward to -- and take the time to enjoy.

But if you're reading this report, perhaps this simple pleasure has turned into a complicated issue somewhere along the way -- delivering heartburn, embarrassing gas and an upset stomach, instead of satisfaction and vital energy. If so, you're not alone. All of these concerns are more common today than ever. And long-term relief is that much harder to find.

Strong, healthy digestion affects not just our ability to enjoy a great meal -- it's an essential part of the foundation for vital health. And that's exactly why we're offering this report.

You see, there are no shortcuts when it comes to putting your digestive system back on the right “tract.” But there *are* ways to relieve digestive discomfort, support long-term digestive health, and promote overall wellness and vitality in the process.

In the following pages, you'll find tips from helpful diet and detox regimens, to critical supplements that can make a major difference. But first, let's take a brief moment to go through some of the basic processes that keep your digestive system healthy—and a few of the pitfalls that could be dragging it down.

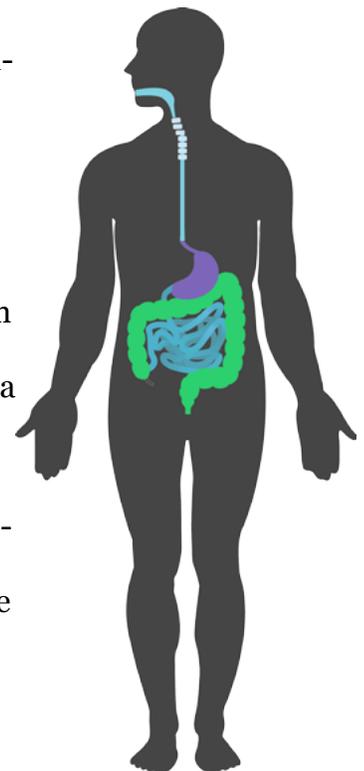
Anatomy 101

Your digestive tract is essentially a hollow tube that begins at your mouth and leads all the way down to your rectum—including your esophagus, stomach, small intestine, and large intestine (also known as your colon).

Along this tract is a lining called the mucosa—which contains small glands responsible for producing digestive enzymes and gastric acid—as well as smooth muscle, responsible for both breaking down food and pushing it along on its way (a wave-like movement called peristalsis). Other key components of the digestive system include the pancreas and liver, both of which are responsible for producing critical digestive fluids that reach your intestines through small connecting tubes, or ducts. (Your gallbladder also plays a role, storing these for later use.)

Digestion actually begins in the mind with anticipation of eating, and with the information coming through your nervous system from all senses. Smelling the fragrant aromas of foods and spices, seeing the colors and textures—this sensory and mental stimulation sends signals to all parts of the digestive system to gear up for the complex job of breaking down food and assimilating nutrients.

The moment food enters your mouth, the breakdown process begins. Saliva contains essential enzymes that begin to digest starches and sugar into smaller molecules, which are broken down further with the help of pancreatic fluids and enzymes from the small intestine. Once they have been broken down into glucose, these starches can be distributed into your bloodstream to be used as energy.



Digestion of protein, on the other hand, does not begin until it reaches your stomach—and once in your small intestine, several enzymes will complete the process of transforming these protein molecules into amino acids. Once absorbed through the intestinal wall into your bloodstream, these amino acids play a key role in building and repairing body tissue.

Fats take the longest time to digest—meaning they'll stay in your stomach the longest as well. Bile acid from the liver will break these molecules into fatty acids and cholesterol, which go on to play a vital role in cell membrane structure, hormone balance, energy production and more.

Finally, while simple carbohydrates are by far the easiest to digest—requiring less time and energy than proteins and fats—fiber-rich complex carbohydrates are another story entirely. That's because fiber is not digestible at all, moving through the digestive tract either partially or completely intact. Of course, that's exactly what makes it such a vital part of your diet, as explained later on in this report.

For now, however, let's talk a little bit more about just how important your digestive system is to your overall health. It does a lot more than you might think!

Digestion and Immunity: Hand and Hand

By far the best known function of a healthy digestive system is to nourish and feed your body. As illustrated above, proper digestion must be taking place in order for your body to absorb essential components like vitamins, nutrients, and amino acids from your food. Without it, you simply won't be getting the vital elements you need to live—let alone to live healthfully.

This strong relationship between digestion and overall health is emphasized as one of the central schools of thought in traditional Asian health systems—the spleen/stomach school, or in simpler terms, the digestive school. These principles describe health as a reflection of the balance and vitality within our digestive system.

For example, we now know that the gastrointestinal system does much more than just digestion. Important functional and regulatory aspects of the endocrine/hormonal system and the immune system (as well as others) take place in the digestive system. In fact, your gut is in many ways the seat of your immune defenses. The naturally acidic environment of your stomach and immune-cell-rich mucosal lining of the digestive tract combine to form a strong immune barrier.

Your intestines also host hundreds of different natural microorganisms. These microbes interact with immunity in numerous ways which scientists are only now beginning to understand. Supporting a balanced gut microbe environment (i.e. our microbiome) with healthy fiber, probiotics and fermented foods, as well as prebiotic nutrients, is an important strategy for immune and overall health.

Digestion from an Eastern Perspective

According to traditional Asian health systems, digestive problems are a result of “digestive weakness” -- a condition that can be inherent as part of our constitution. More often, however, it's acquired as part of our lifestyles and dietary habits. The weakness is seen as reduced digestive “heat.” In Western terms, this heat can be understood as pertaining to essential enzymatic and secretory activity.

This means that in a “cold” digestive environment, basic digestive functions crawl to a stop.

How does this happen?

Typically, “coldness” is actually the result of “overheating” and subsequent “burnout.” Overwork, lack of sleep, too many rich or processed foods, eating too fast, drinking too much alcohol and/or caffeine, overstimulation and stress...All of these factors can drive the digestive system (and overall health) to the point of exhaustion. The result would be decreased digestive enzymes and a drop in hydrochloric acid (HCL) production.

Reduced HCL and digestive enzymes manifest with several classic signs—many of which might be familiar: Bloating and fatigue after a meal, as well as occasional diarrhea or constipation and flatulence. It’s also worth noting that these digestive changes tend to happen naturally over the years, which means our need for comprehensive digestive support is likely to increase with age.

What about Antacids?

Even occasional digestive issues can compromise your intestinal lining over time, allowing enzymes and food particles to escape into your bloodstream before they have been adequately broken down. A common sign of this are increased allergies.

Also, as gastric acid production decreases, your body is less able to absorb critical minerals and vitamins from your food. This affects roughly 30% of older adults.

Introduce frequent antacid use into the mix, and this issue is compounded. An increasing number of studies have demonstrated that acid blockers can potentially inhibit dietary iron absorption by as much as 52%.

And iron isn’t the only nutrient that’s depleted as a result of low stomach acid. Inadequate protein digestion can also significantly impact absorption of vitamin B12. Additionally, reduced absorption of calcium and magnesium can deprive bones of the minerals they need to maintain their strength and density.

In the end, the temporary relief you find with these antacids is usually counterproductive over the long run. The fact remains that most cases of acid reflux stem from weak digestion in the first place: Undigested food becomes trapped in the stomach for a longer period than normal, producing an up-rising of heat, and stomach acids can move up into your esophagus, along with that trademark burning sensation and chest pain.

It may sound strange, but what we really need is a greater production of HCL—that is, more “heat,” not less. The bottom line: These “Band-Aid” solutions may work at first, but not in the long run.

For every system of the body, the focus should be on promoting long term health and balance... not concealing. This is where an integrative approach involving diet, lifestyle, supplements, and detoxification, will always serve us best.

So what can we do to support healthy, balanced digestion over the long term? To begin, you’ll want to take a closer look at what you eat.

Eat and Drink Your Way to Better Digestive Health

If we simply take the time to slow down, chew thoroughly and eat mindfully, it can make a big difference in long-term digestive health. But we should also be looking closely at what's on the plate. In fact, the food that we eat is responsible for telling the digestive system what to do—and if it's not receiving proper direction in the way of natural whole foods, it's not going to do its job as well. That's why a fiber-rich, organic, nutritious and balanced diet can go a long way in helping to achieve this goal.

In this case, the “fiber-rich” aspect is particularly important.

The “Ins and Outs” of Fiber

There are two types of fiber. Let's start with the insoluble kind, found in whole-wheat products, leafy green vegetables, fruit skins and root vegetable skins, corn, bran, and a variety of seeds and nuts. Your digestive enzymes won't break down this type of fiber—so its primary benefit is as a “bulking agent,” facilitating bowel movements and controlling the pH of your colon.

Soluble fiber on the other hand, is found in foods such as oat bran, beans, barley, flax seed, and psyllium husks. It binds with water and fat to form a gel-like consistency. This also helps to maintain your colon's pH—but it also helps support balanced cholesterol and blood sugar by prolonging the time it takes for your body to absorb glucose.

It's easy to see how both types of fiber play critical roles in lasting digestive health.

On the Lookout: Food Allergies

One thing to be on the lookout for—especially with respect to digestive health—is potential food intolerances. Milk (which contains the sugar lactose and the protein casein) is a sore spot for many. Also, sensitivity to wheat gluten is a major contributing factor to many cases of irritable bowel syndrome and its related symptoms.

With that said, even the healthiest foods can become a problem, depending on your body—and the only way to know for certain is to take a food allergy test. An elimination diet can help identify food allergy triggers as well. Begin eliminating common allergenic foods from your diet one by one, like dairy, gluten, soy, corn, shellfish, eggs, and then gradually add them back in and see how you feel. Be sure to keep a food diary and list any noticeable changes after eating certain foods.

Supplements for Lasting Digestive Health

Certain supplements can be especially helpful for digestive health. Probiotics and prebiotics are two of the most important supplements you can take to help restore healthy digestion. Probiotics provide live strains of friendly microbes to balance your intestinal microbiome. Prebiotics, on the other hand, will ensure that your friendly flora is provided with the proper nutrients and environment to thrive.

Herbal and nutritional support can also be very helpful for supporting optimal digestive health. EcoNugenics recommends Integrative Digestive Formula[®] which is based on ancient Eastern digestive health principles. This comprehensive blend combines herbs, digestive enzymes, beneficial mushrooms and minerals. The truly unique feature of this formula is that it addresses the root causes of

occasional indigestion, while simultaneously promoting overall digestive health and balance over the long-term.*

This formula contains several herbal combinations that work in synergy with one another. Each of these ingredients has a long history of safe and effective use:

- Pomegranate seed (*Punica granatum*) promotes bile flow and gastric secretions.*
- Lesser galangal (*Alpinia officinarum*) supports digestion and relieves occasional gas.*
- Black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) helps neutralize excess stomach acid and promotes gastric secretions.*
- Cardamom fruit (*Elettaria cardomomum*) supports bile flow and gastric secretions, while promoting renal energy and warming the stomach.*
- Cassia bark (*Cinnamomum aromaticum*) helps relieve occasional gas and flatulence, stimulates the appetite, supports immunity and warms the digestive tract.*

In addition to these fundamental ingredients, the formula includes several other herbs that help expand upon the actions listed above—all of which, in combination, can help regulate and smooth digestion in part by moving digestive energy downward. As a result, you'll see a direct effect on occasional acid reflux and heartburn, indigestion, flatulence, and food stagnation.*

Fresh ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) and sacred lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) help alleviate food stagnation and aid in nutrient absorption. Deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL), henon bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*), and tangerine peel (*Citrus reticulata*) help relieve occasional acid reflux, move digestive energy downward, and provide moisture.*

Mineral support is also critical—for example, zinc is essential for supporting enzymatic processes, while chromium helps alleviate sugar cravings.*

Low doses of plant-based digestive enzymes -- including alpha-galactosidase, protease, amylase, lipase, phytase, and invertase -- can assist stomach enzymes in the digestion process.

Lastly, a targeted selection of beneficial mushrooms provides critical immune and digestive support:*

- Poria (*Wolfporia cocos*) supports the liver in the digestion process.*
- Maitake (*Grifola frondosa*) supports blood sugar and lipid balance and promotes liver health.*
- Hericium (*Hericium erinaceus*) supports healthy upper digestion.*

As you can see, a combination this diverse can offer comprehensive benefits: it ignites, warms and supports the entire digestive tract, while helping to relieve occasional indigestion, heartburn, flatulence and fatigue.*

Seasonal Detox: The Missing Puzzle Piece

One last piece that's essential for digestive health -- and total body-mind health, for that matter -- is regular seasonal detox. This is especially important in the fall season, which relates to lungs and large intestine in traditional Asian medicine. It's a time of reflection and a wonderful opportunity to lighten the burden in preparation for winter, both physically and emotionally.

Detox and elimination is one of the most basic and meaningful biological activities in the body -- and the only way to get rid of toxins that may be lurking deep within. And your digestive system will play a key role in any type of seasonal cleanse.

Detox your Stress

Waste removal takes place in the colon in a very literal way -- but in a larger sense, we are also releasing old information and emotions, which according to traditional Asian medicine, are naturally tied to this essential function. As such, a sluggish colon creates a whole host of issues including emotional imbalance -- a common manifestation. The two are very much linked, and the physical and emotional process of “letting go” is at the heart of this connection.

We aren't always aware of what we need to let go of, but a gentle, dedicated detoxification program, emphasizing detox foods and nutrients, provides a wonderful opportunity to become more in tune with our needs. On a practical level, fall detox also primes our body for the challenges of winter and especially for the tendency toward stress and overindulgence during the holidays. In general, gentle seasonal detoxification programs can have a tremendous impact on your health, happiness, and wellbeing.

So what exactly is involved in an effective cleanse and detox program? Many people have advocated fasting as the primary method of detoxification, but this is an unnecessarily rigid (and often unhealthful) approach to ridding the body of harmful toxins.

Instead, you should start by focusing on the basics of healthy eating—increasing your intake of fiber and green vegetables, for example, and boosting your liquid consumption. This can be in the form of pure filtered water, or vegetable soup (a particularly appealing option when the weather cools down). Eliminate processed foods, sugar, gluten, alcohol and dairy during your detox process, and emphasize nutrient-dense, whole foods.

Refreshing Lemon Detox Drink

A simple lemon and olive oil drink is also an important part of any seasonal cleanse. It's easy to prepare:



Take the pieces of one organic lemon (seeds removed) and mix with about one-and-a-quarter cups of pure filtered water, along with one tablespoon of olive oil. Then, strain the contents—not too much, as you still want some of the pectin solubilized from the pith of the peels to remain—and drink before bed on an empty stomach.

This refreshing drink can help to support the discharge of toxins from your liver, and many people report that it improves their sleep as well.

Regular exercise, mind-body stress relief practices like meditation and yoga, and targeted detoxification supplements also go a long way to support the process of removing toxins from the body, clearing the mind and calming the emotions.

The results are greater vitality and longevity, particularly in regards to digestive health.

Finally, none of these measures will get you far without plenty of pure water—your body needs ample amounts of fluid to form the saliva and gastric secretions that are crucial to digestion. Just don't put your water on ice—beverages that are too cold will further reduce the “heat” you want to restore. Warm beverages such as herbal tea, hot water or low sodium broths are best.

Returning the Favor

Your digestive system works hard to support nearly every area of health. You can return the favor by naturally promoting healthy digestion from as many angles as possible: botanical and nutritional support, a balanced and whole food diet, regular seasonal detox and calming relaxation time whenever you can get it.

All of these efforts can make a significant difference. The digestive balance and peak-performing immune benefits that this integrative approach promotes can help build a strong foundation for supporting long-lasting, total body health.

For optimal vitality, follow your gut!