



The Wellness News

Digestive Health

Diet, Exercise, and Digestion

Digestive health can be an overwhelming and confusing topic, but these tips can help you understand the relationship between diet, exercise, and common digestive issues such as discomfort, bloating, gas, cramping, constipation, and acid reflux.

The Best Exercise for Digestion

There are many types of exercise that can help your digestion, but the key to all is staying physically active and consistent. Exercise will help your body not only digest foods, but also metabolize and absorb key nutrients as well as help your body rid extra waste. Regular exercise has also been shown to help IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) patients and relieve constipation. Strenuous exercise right after eating is not recommended. Remember, the form of exercise you choose should be one that you enjoy and are willing to commit to regularly.

Try yoga: With an emphasis on breathing, relaxing, letting go, and stretching, yoga not only helps to relax your mind and body, but also helps you create more body awareness. You may start to realize that you are holding stress and tension in your belly which can be lessened by yoga. Yoga helps to manage stress (one of the most common contributors of poor digestion), relieve tension, and improve your overall digestion.



Breathe for your Belly



Breathe: No time for yoga, or just not your thing? Take a deep breath. “Studies have also shown that breathing exercises that strengthen the diaphragm muscles may prevent reflux by reinforcing the barrier between the two organs,” says gastroenterologist Ian Harnik, MD from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Try this: Sit up straight and practice breathing deeply and slowly, in and out, using the muscles at the top of your belly. Place your hands flat on your stomach so you can really feel the muscles and stomach moving as you inhale and exhale slowly.



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Common Nutrition No-No's

Not watching your fluids: Not drinking an adequate amount of water daily or consuming too many carbonated beverages can cause unnecessary bloating and/or constipation. Work your way toward eight glasses of water a day to help your body absorb nutrients and get rid of waste. Tip: Start your day with a warm glass of water with fresh lemon juice and feel the instant digestive boost.

Eating too late at night: Eating too late, whether it is a small snack or a late dinner, can cause discomfort and heart burn. When we lay down after eating, the food pushes up from the stomach back into the esophagus, moving the opposite way we want it to go. Tip: Eat at least two to three hours before bedtime.

Not eating enough fiber. Simply stated, most people do not consume the recommended amount of fiber (25 grams daily for women and 38 for men). Aim to increase your daily servings of fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Keep a diet that is high in soluble and insoluble fiber to keep your bowels healthy and the healthy bacteria in your gut flourishing.

Eating too fast: Slow down. Chew each bite thoroughly and practice placing your utensils down during your meal. Digestion actually begins in your mouth where the enzyme, Amylase, starts to breakdown carbohydrates. When we eat too fast, the signals that say we are full are not registered. Tip: Slow down. It can take up to 20 minutes for your body to acknowledge that it's full. Eating slower can help decrease feelings of bloating, gas, constipation and allow those signals to properly register.



Did you Know?

Top irritants that effect our body's digestion are smoking, excess alcohol, caffeine, sugar, fatty foods and processed carbohydrates. You don't need to eliminate all of these overnight, but if you focus on limiting one irritant at a time, your stomach and overall health will start feeling the benefits.

Resources:

http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/the-healthy-woman/digestive_health.pdf
<http://www.everydayhealth.com/digestive-health-pictures/the-best-moves-to-aid-digestion.aspx#/slide-3>
<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/H/HE-0908/HE-0908.pdf>

Mindful Eating: Slow Down for Weight Loss



In this busy world, it's easy to get so caught up in emails, running errands, drinking coffee, and hitting the "reply" or "like" button, that we neglect our own inner triggers. Because of these distractions, we tend to eat more automatically and pay less attention to the nutrients we are putting into our bodies. Unfortunately, many people are thinking less about the food choices they make, and simply going for what is quick and convenient.

Mindful Eating

So, what to do? The answer may seem simple, and in theory, it is... *practice mindful eating!* Mindful eating is when you give 100% of your attention to your meal. Put your iPhone away, save the twitter update for later, and sit down in a quiet place with no distractions. This sends the important message to your body that it's "time to eat."

When we slow down, we will absorb more nutrients, and ultimately end up eating less. Keep in mind that it takes your body at least 20 minutes for the feeling of satiety (fullness) to sink in. If you eat on the go, or eat too fast, you are not allowing your body enough time to know it's had enough.

Mindful Eating Tips:

- Check in with your body to really notice how hungry you are. Also, do not eat at your desk. Take time to eat outside, in the conference room, or wherever you can sit in peace and quiet with no distractions from your computer, coworkers, etc. Plus, your desk area often harbors more germs than your bathroom, yuck!
- Sit and look at your food. Digestions starts with the senses that let you see, smell, and notice your food. This sends the signal to your brain and the rest of your body to prepare for food. Then, your stomach begins to secrete the necessary gastric juices to prepare for digestion.
- Chew your food thoroughly. Digestion of food begins in your mouth when the saliva begins to break down any carbohydrates, so slow down, chew well, and enjoy your food!

<http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2010/03/buddhism-on-the-dinner-plate/>