

A close-up photograph of a pregnant woman's bare midsection. Her hands are positioned on either side of her belly button, with her fingers gently cupping the skin. She is wearing a grey, textured top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

# LEARN HOW TO IMPROVE *Your Digestion*



# LEARN HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR DIGESTION

The key to health and happiness is good digestion. Did you know that:

95% of your serotonin is manufactured in your gut, and

80% of your immune system is located in your gut?

So many people have digestive issues. So many women struggle with hormonal imbalances, skin issues, food intolerances and more. The gut bacteria is essential for immune function, metabolism, mood, sleep and blood sugar balancing to name a few.

The bacteria in the gut helps to digest food, vitamins and regulate other functions in the body. What if the bacteria is out of balance?

## **Without good bacteria in your gut, you could experience:**

Extra weight/trouble losing weight

Obesity

Trouble gaining weight

Joint aches and pain

IBS (irritable bowel syndrome)

Nausea

Heartburn

Bloating

Constipation

Loose stool/diarrhea

Trouble breathing/asthma

Painful menstrual cycles

Chronic/frequent yeast/urinary tract infections

Low libido

Fatigue

Foggy mind and head

Memory loss

Headaches/migraines

Lack of focus

Poor concentration

The 3 PM crash

Depression

Anxiety

Phobic tendencies

Mood swings



# WHAT CAUSES DIGESTIVE HEALTH PROBLEMS?

## NOT EATING FOODS THAT CONTAIN ENZYMES

**Raw foods and fermented type foods contain enzymes.** Enzymes are vital for the body, particularly digestion. If you are cooking most of your food, you no doubt are not getting enough enzymes in your diet, because cooking kills enzymes, even more so in the processed and fast food businesses.

## DRINKING BEVERAGES HIGH IN SUGAR

**Today, highly processed sugar bombs are what are replacing the more nutrient-dense type foods.** This is leaving people both undernourished and overfed. If you are looking for one easy target to get started with, the worst offenders are probably sugary fruit drinks and sodas. And much of these offenders are sold with the word “healthy” on it. Naturally, we all love food and it’s a pleasure to enjoy. It’s not that you should cut out sugar entirely, although you might have to if you have some concerning health problems. But apart from that, moderation in everything is the key.

## EATING PROCESSED FOODS

**Most people know that when it comes to the Western diet, it’s all about fast this, fast that and fast foods too.** People look for quick, easy and convenient ways of eating their food. This makes processed foods such a ‘blessing in disguise’ to millions of modern families. Unfortunately, many do not realize that along with the modern way of eating processed foods, comes a long list of modern diseases as a result. If you love popping your foods into the microwaves, you love the easiness of canned foods; it might be time to start looking at your health, particularly your digestive health.



## EATING INDUSTRIALIZED ANIMAL PRODUCTS LIKE CHEESE, MEAT AND MILK

Make sure to find a local farm, where you can buy organic cheese milk, and hormone free animal products. The hormones in foods disrupt the good bacteria in your body. If you cannot find a local farm, always look for organic dairy and hormone free meats.

## GOOD DIGESTION IS THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD HEALTH

When you understand the whole digestive process and learn about helpful tips to keep it healthy, you will be able to diagnose as well as treat your own digestive issues.

**Having a healthy digestive system is imperative to good health; in fact, it's the foundation of good health.**

The digestive system consists of hormones, nerves, blood and bacteria. They all work together to do an intricate job of digesting all the liquids and foods that are consumed daily. The digestive system also interacts with all the other systems of the body.

There are digestive juices with enzymes in them that speed up all the chemical reactions in your body, breaking down the food you eat into nutrients.

Cells are to be found in the lining of your stomach and the small intestine which release and produce hormones. These stimulate your digestive juices and regulate the appetite. Nerves are also to be found by which the digestive system is controlled. These nerves connect digestive organs to the spinal cord and the brain, releasing chemicals that contract or relax your muscles. There are also nerves in the GI (or gastrointestinal) tract that get triggered when food is present, enabling the digestive system to function properly.



# HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM HEALTHY?

You simply cannot afford to let your digestive system become ill. Here are some important steps to help it to function efficiently:

- **Chew your food well before swallowing.** Chewing is imperative for proper digestion because the more the food is broken down in your mouth, the less hard work the digestion system must deal with. Your brain also needs time to get the message that your stomach is full – rather allow your stomach to prepare for the food that it is going to receive.
- **Fibre, fibre, and more fibre keep the food moving easily through your intestines.** Soluble fibres such as whole grains and veggies absorb water and prevent stools from being too watery. Insoluble fibres help by adding bulk to your stools. Fibre also helps to break down any fatty foods you have eaten.
- **Drink plenty of water** – because the water helps to dissolve the soluble fibre, allowing your food to pass through the intestines easily. When you have too little water, you have harder stools which make it more difficult to pass through your colon.
- **Get moving because exercise also moves the food easily through the digestive system and increases the flow of blood to all your organs.** Exercises tone the wall of the colon to reduce anxiety and stress because this can play havoc with your digestive system. How many people have IBS – irritable bowel syndrome? What about ulcers? – All stress related. Getting enough sleep is important too.
- **Eating warm foods is being friendly to your spleen.** The spleen does not like the cold. The digestive enzymes also break down foods properly that are warm. It is the cold foods and drinks that can cause the spleen not to work properly. Soups and warm teas and cooked vegetables are great.

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- **Give up smoking because smoking can not only impair your digestive system but your health altogether.** Smoking weakens your lungs. Nicotine is believed to relax the muscles at the lower oesophagus which keeps acid in the stomach. This is where it belongs and when the muscles are relaxed, you experience acid reflux, you have heartburn and you start increasing your risk for gastrointestinal cancer.
  - **Cut down on alcohol.** Sometimes when you drink a lot, your digestion gets out of sorts because acid secretion in your body is affected – also the absorption of nutrients. Heartburn, diarrhoea, and liver problems are affected when your consumption of alcohol is unreasonable.
  - **Start to lose weight because just even a few pounds over your ideal weight can affect your digestion.** It can affect the valve that is situated between your stomach and the oesophagus which won't close properly. When you lose weight, you ease the pressure so that your digestive system can continue to work properly.
  - **Taking probiotics and fibre are a couple of things that the Western diet lacks.** The body has good bacteria and bad bacteria and maintaining the right balance is essential to your health. Probiotics are good bacteria; easing IBS and preventing infections and allergies.
  - **Eat mindfully:** Sometimes we eat too much too quickly, especially if we're not paying attention. This can lead to gas, bloating and indigestion. Eating slower and taking notice of what you are putting into your system can reduce symptoms of IBS and even ulcerative colitis. In order to eat mindfully, eat slower, focus on what you're eating, away from television and phones, notice how your food tastes and how it smells – simply enjoy your food, taking notice of everything about it.



# BOOST YOUR DIGESTIVE HEALTH WITH THESE FOODS:

## **Cultured Foods (fermented)**

I recommend building up your intake of cultured foods during this program. Cultured foods are easy to make and are loaded with natural enzymes and probiotics. Start with a tablespoon once a day and build up from there.

## **Cultured foods do the following:**

- Restore good gut flora by supporting healthy bacteria colonization
- Improve digestion and aid in natural enzyme activity
- Reduce sugar cravings
- Cleanse the colon and intestinal tract, leaving your body free of toxic waste that hampers digestion

## **You can find live bacteria in the following cultured foods and drinks:**

- Coconut milk kefir—homemade kefir has 65+ strains of good bacteria
- Cultured vegetables such as kimchi or sauerkraut
- Coconut water kefir available in the refrigerated section of health food stores (which has beneficial microbial strains, more than most bottled, store-bought probiotics)



# YOUR GUT IS A DISEASE FIGHTING SYSTEM IN YOUR BODY

**Enzymes and acids work to sterilize your food.** By doing this, your body is protected from infection and illness. Your digestive system aids in the function of the immune system through a cluster of lymphoid tissue that is to be found on the walls of your small intestine. Your gastrointestinal lining is exposed to the external environment of your system, enabling bad bacteria to gain access to your gut. The lymphoid tissue aids in monitoring the lining of your digestive system and if necessary, will produce antibodies to fight off any 'enemies' of your gut.

**The digestive system is home to different types of bacteria which play a very imperative role in fighting off disease and keeping you're healthy.** When an infection invades your body, the risk of cancer is increased. Good bacteria will fight off the infection, but it is your responsibility to look after your digestive health for it to do its job and stay healthy. Scientists continue to study both the good and the bad effects of bacteria in the digestive system. Doctors have started using good bacteria to treat those who end up with life-threatening infections like *Clostridium difficile* (C diff) infection.

**The gut is like our second brain, very sophisticated, and affecting us all profoundly.** When inflamed, you will know all about indigestion, bloating and pain which over time can become serious. There are fantastic mucilaginous (mucous-like) herbs and foods such as linseed, slippery elm, chia seeds, fenugreek seeds and liquorice root which support the healthy mucous lining of your digestive system. Raw foods have the necessary enzymes to support your digestion system like pawpaw and pineapple. If you eat more than 70% of your foods raw, you truly will notice a feeling of digestive ease and lightness. If your digestion is not working thoroughly, then toxic waste will certainly build up.



**A key component to improving your digestion is enzymes.** You have natural digestive enzymes to break down the food you eat. Stomach acid allows your body to secrete bile and supports your own digestive enzymes. But if your stomach acid level is low, digestion will slow down, which can contribute to allergies and an inability to lose weight.

You can find digestive enzymes at your local health food store or online at Amazon. You can either buy enzymes that are plant based and vegan, or varieties containing ox bile as the primary active ingredient. Bile is naturally produced by the liver, stored in the gallbladder, and released to the intestines when you eat fat, so taking ox bile can help your body break down fats.

Consider your digestion system as that of a bank account – you need to invest in it to reap the rewards.