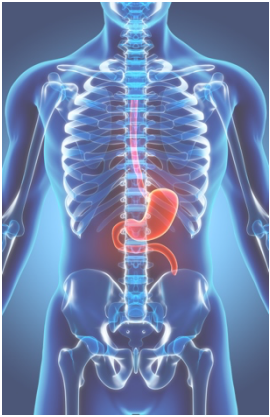


DIGESTIVE HEALTH



The digestive system is made up of the digestive tract, liver, pancreas, and gallbladder, and helps turn the foods that you eat into energy. Nutrients from foods are also needed for your body's growth and repair. Unhealthy lifestyle and poor food choices can affect your digestion.

Common digestive problems include indigestion, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, and heartburn. If you experience any of these conditions for more than a few days, you should make an appointment to see your healthcare provider. Keep in mind that a healthy digestive system can help you avoid these problems and enable your body to use the nutrients from foods that you eat so that you can stay healthy.

Tips to keep your digestive system healthy:

- ❖ **Eat more fiber.** Include more whole grains, dried beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables. A high fiber diet adds bulk and draws water into the stools so you are less likely to be constipated.
- ❖ **Add foods containing probiotics.** Include yogurt, probiotic drinks (such as Yakult) which contain good bacteria to improve digestive health and strengthen your immune system.

- ❖ **Eat at regular times.** Schedule your meal times and snack times around the same time every day. It is best to eat every 3-4 hours to keep your digestive system in good shape.
- ❖ **Drink plenty of water.** Water softens the stools so they pass through more easily.
- ❖ **Incorporate regular physical activity.** Exercise helps to keep your bowels moving and relieves constipation.
- ❖ **Reduce stress.** Anxiety and stress can trigger indigestion, nausea, stomach pain, or diarrhea. Learn to relax and manage stress.
- ❖ **Avoid smoking, limit caffeine and alcohol.** Smoking, as well as too much caffeine and alcohol can increase your risk for stomach ulcers and heartburn.
- ❖ **Limit high fat foods.** Choose lean cuts of meat, skinless poultry, and seafood. Fatty foods tend to slow down digestion and promote constipation.

References:

- <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/digestive-system-how-it-works>
- <http://patients.gi.org/topics/digestive-health-tips/>