

The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

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Digestion System Key to Overall Health

Presented by:

“The foods that promote longevity, virtue, strength, health, happiness, and joy; are juicy, smooth, substantial, and agreeable to the stomach,” says the sacred Bhagavad Gita scripture from India. This ancient advice is proving to be true in a lot of ways. Scientists around the world are discovering how much stomach and digestive health impact your total well being. After all, if your body can’t properly digest and absorb nutrients from food, your whole body is starved of the things it needs for growth, energy and repair.

How do you know if your digestion system isn’t functioning optimally? You usually experience bloating, stomach pain and indigestion. Many minor ailments can cause stomach upset. However, serious disease may also be responsible. If you suffer from digestion problems frequently, check with your chiropractor.

Lifestyle, Diet and Digestion

What can you do to ensure your digestion system is running smoothly? Review your diet and lifestyle to make sure they harmonize with maintaining digestive health.

How easily do you handle stress? Too much stress increases acidity in the stomach, which can lead to nausea and pain. Are you taking medications? Some drugs irritate the stomach. Check with your pharmacist to see if these side effects can be minimized.

You should always practice stress management. Keep your weight under control. Exercise regularly. And limit your alcohol consumption.

A Little Extra Help for Digestive Health

To keep your digestion system in good shape, incorporate foods into your diet that are rich in synbiotics, which are classified into two categories: prebiotics and probiotics.

Prebiotics are non-digestible substances that boost the growth of healthy bacteria in your stomach, which aid digestion. Foods high in prebiotics are onions, leeks, bananas, asparagus, wheat and oat. About 5 to 8 grams daily of these foods is the optimal amount required for a therapeutic effect.

Exercise of the Week

Seated Upper Back Extension

Difficulty: Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Seated in a chair with a backrest that extends up to mid-back (at or around height of shoulder blades).

Exercise: both hands together, and reach arms overhead. Then, reach up and back, letting upper back bend over backrest of chair. Also bring chin up toward the ceiling. Concentrate on ‘opening’ effect this stretch can have on chest and shoulders. Hold for 30-60 seconds, and then return to starting position. Repeat 2X.



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Probiotics are the flip side of the digestive coin. They consist of live bacteria that benefit your digestion system. These types of bacteria are found in your intestines and include acidophilus, bifidobacterium bifidum and lactobacillus casei. Probiotics destroy harmful bacteria and protect the body by acting as natural antibiotics.

Where can you find probiotics in food? Milk and yogurt are good choices. The yogurt needs to have live-culture for probiotics to exist. The good news is most yogurt products are of the live-culture variety. However, each type of probiotic bacteria provides a different health benefit, so the specific types included may vary from one yogurt product to the next. Still, getting sufficient amounts of probiotics can provide numerous benefits for healthy digestion. When purchasing yogurt, check the label - opt for a product low in saturated fat and trans fat free.



As it's a relatively new field of study, there's a lot about probiotics that science doesn't understand. But preliminary research indicates probiotics may also play a role in fortifying your immune system and fighting infections. As well, they help your body absorb nutrients – like vitamins and minerals – more efficiently. This may represent the top probiotic benefit for the elderly, as their digestion systems have more trouble extracting nutrients from food.

Evidence shows probiotics can help those suffering from lactose intolerance. Yogurt with live culture bacteria changes the lactose to lactic acid, which is easier for the body to tolerate.¹

Other Natural Solutions for Digestive Health

Besides synbiotics, a number of other natural ingredients are used to treat stomach and digestion problems.

The most well known is ginger, which has been used in herbal medicine for centuries. It's often prescribed for nausea and diarrhea. A study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* revealed ginger was effective in reducing a specific form of diarrhea that is the leading cause of infant death in the developing world.²

Long popular as a relaxation-inducing tea, chamomile may also soothe nausea and upset stomach. In Germany, the regulatory commission responsible for natural products officially endorses chamomile for treating gastrointestinal spasms.

The bitter African herb devil's claw is prescribed by herbal medicine practitioners to spur appetite. It's believed to increase stomach acid and help digestion. However, it may aggravate some other digestion conditions. Also, devil's claw should not be used if you have gallstones or a heart condition. Consult your chiropractor before using herbs.



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Quote of the Week

"To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art."

- La Rochefoucauld

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Writer/Editor: David Coyne

Writer: Dr. Christian Guenette, DC

Design: Elena Zhukova

Photos: Fred Goldstein