

Digestion 101

Got a question about why your GI tract may shake, rattle and roll?

Or why when you eat, you bloat, belch or get indigestion instead of energized?

You're not alone in your quest for digestive wellness.

Here are a few of the answers we've given to customers just like you!



Q What's the number one reason for stomach woes?

A Aha! If only it were that simple! Two reasons may be age and disease. As we age, our ability to produce the enzymes and hydrochloric acid necessary to digest our food becomes less efficient. Intestinal disorders such as Crohn's and irritable bowel, along with inflammatory conditions, limit the ability of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract to do its job effectively. If food is not broken down properly—chewing thoroughly, adequate stomach acid and enzymes, and finally plenty of friendly intestinal bacteria—the system malfunctions.

Q What are some of the symptoms of a “malfunction”?

A Bloating, belching and reflux are signs that the stomach is struggling. Diarrhea and/or constipation could be from poor stomach digestion or an inflamed GI tract, Candida or food allergies. When the GI tract is spastic, almost “kicking”, invariably allergies may be the culprit, such as gluten or dairy. Gas is normal but excessive, smelly toots are a sign of faulty digestion. Constipation is caused by poor hydration, fiber issues, medications and certain GI disorders.

Q Are there simple solutions?

A Your body is always trying to maintain a balance or equilibrium. When it is not working normally, it's said to be in dysequilibrium. The prefix “dys” means “abnormal”, “difficult” and “impaired”. Thus the first order of digestive wellness is to restore balance. This may mean taking digestive supplements that have enzymes to break down the main food groups of carbs, fats, sugars and dairy; increasing stomach acid and restoring a proper flora balance in the GI tract. For some, it may mean a little tweaking of all three. Supplements should be a help not a substitute for a healthy diet, though.

Q Should I see a doctor first?

A As with most conditions, trying to self-diagnose or treat is not a good idea. You may have a serious disorder (such as cancer or a blockage) that requires immediate medical intervention. Always consult your physician for any changes in your “normal” bodily functions.

Q Could you explain how digestive enzymes help?

A Everything in your body happens because of chemical reactions. Enzymes are the catalysts which spark these chemical

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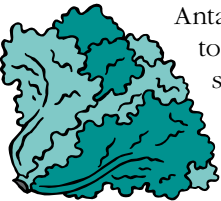
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reactions, including digestion. Without digestive enzymes, the meat you eat doesn't get broken down into amino acids to build your muscles and support brain activity. Likewise, carbs in the pasta can't be used for simple energy. Neither can the sugar in the fruits or juices. You get the picture. What's more, any vitamins and minerals in those foods are not available to power the body. Vitamins and minerals themselves are co-enzymes. The typical one we often cite is magnesium and its role in the energy cycle. So you see, digestion is more than food going in one end and coming out the other! Digestive woes can compromise immunity, nutrient absorption and lead to premature aging.

Q What if everything I eat bothers my stomach?

A If your doctor has ruled out a medical reason, do a little sleuth work of your own. What bothers you specifically? Certain foods? Are you taking any medications known to erode the stomach lining, typically anti-inflammatory? Are symptoms worse on an empty stomach or after you eat? Sometimes just chewing your food to mush before you swallow is a simple answer as chemicals in saliva trigger the stomach to produce hydrochloric acid for digestion. Next, your stomach lining is the protective mechanism from keeping that acid from eroding away healthy tissue. A whole grain diet including oatmeal and brown rice, fibrous beans and leafy greens help rebuild the lining as needed.

Antacids block stomach acids and your ability to break down foods. Herbal remedies such as slippery elm, marshmallow and deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL) ease the pain and help healing without interfering with digestion.



Q Why is acidophilus so important?

A Acidophilus replenishes the friendly flora in your intestines, one of the most important parts of the digestive process for nutrients like the B vitamins, A, D and K. The flora maintains the right "atmosphere" for this process, keeps Candida in check and supports healthy bowel movements for the elimination of toxins. Toxins not eliminated can pass through the GI tract back into the bloodstream. Thus, "daily housecleaning" strengthens immunity. Imagine what your kitchen would be like if you tossed food into the trash and never emptied it! Taking fructooligosaccharides like NutraFlora® FOS with acidophilus can re-colonize flora even faster.

Q What about Candida overgrowth?

A Candida is normal to the GI tract so if it can be found in the mouth (thrush) or vaginal area, suspect that it's out of control. A craving for sugar, annoying body rashes and a pasty, doughboy complexion are signs of Candida overgrowth. An unresponsive fatigue may also be a symptom as Candida may intercept and use CoQ10,

a nutrient all cells require for energy and life. Many of the prescribed anti-fungals do not completely eradicate a Candida overgrowth. However, olive leaf extract has been shown to be effective. Be forewarned that you may feel flu-like and achy as toxins are released during die-off. And you will need to replenish any good bacteria with an acidophilus and FOS combination to bring the GI flora back to balance.

Q I'm allergic to gluten. How does that affect my GI tract?

A Gluten sensitivity is more serious than it sounds as it is an auto-immune disorder. Antibodies to the proteins in grains are produced, causing inflammation and ultimately damage to the lining of the intestines. Malnutrition, osteoporosis and other disorders are possible outcomes if a gluten-free diet is not followed as irreversible damage to intestinal villi (which help transport nutrients) can occur. Even small amounts of gluten may trigger a reaction. Taking a digestive enzyme specific for gluten may help, especially to combat cross-contamination with gluten-containing foods. Since the GI tract is compromised, a regular digestive enzyme may be necessary. Systemic enzymes like Fibro-Enzymes™ reduce inflammation which may impede healing, as well as decrease pain and symptoms. The good news is that early treatment may prevent end-stage Celiac and restore normal GI function.



Q I hear mixed reports on fiber. Should I or shouldn't I?

A Fiber has been shown to help lower your risk of colon cancer and diabetes, decrease cholesterol and maintain healthy weight efforts. Sounds good, right? But if you suffer constipation, fiber may add to the overload. The main function of the large intestine and final phase of digestion is to extract water and salts from stool before elimination. Water is nature's laxative. Drink at least your weight in ounces. If you're not constipated, start adding fiber in small amounts by consuming fruits, veggies, nuts and whole grains to reach the recommended 25-35 grams a day. If you take a fiber product, note the water requirement on the label. Acacia fiber is a good choice as it mixes easily with water. Plus acacia adds fiber without the stomach bloating and GI stress typical of other fiber supplements.

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