



REAL FOOD DIGESTION

REAL FOOD RESCUE

Digestion

You may have the most perfect diet, but if you are not digesting well you are not getting the nutrients from those healthy foods that you are consuming! The body needs to fully digest and assimilate food in order to get all the vitamins and minerals you need. This can leave you with low energy, digestive issues, and still feeling lousy. Every cell that makes up every tissue, that makes up every organ depends upon the body's digestive system to provide key nutrients to keep it functioning. This guide will help you with healing your digestion from North to South, so you can feel your absolute best while eating real food because after all, you are what you absorb!

Starting with the brain/mouth:

Digestion begins with the brain, and the mouth. When you smell something delicious cooking (take bacon for example), the sight and smell of it triggers the salivary glands to produce more saliva. Consider the mouth your physical gateway to digestion! Your teeth physically break down food, but there are also enzymes in our saliva (salivary amylase) that break down the sugars in food, and start to pre-digest it.

- It is important to chew your food thoroughly to help break it down before swallowing.
- You should be in a parasympathetic (relaxed) state while eating. When the body is not relaxed, you are not digesting food properly.
- In our rush-rush society we tend to eat standing up, sitting in the car, or end up wolfing our food down while focusing on other things.
- In Europe people take time to eat, and eat more slowly. In the U.S. we tend to eat way too fast!
- Breathe, sit and relax, take time to eat

Next is the stomach:

When you swallow, the food enters the esophagus and passes into the stomach. The stomach continues to break down foods. However, the stomach needs to be a very acidic environment to properly churn and break down food before passing into the intestines. The stomach should be a pH of 1.5-3.0. Stomach acid bathes the stomach, kills bacteria and parasites, activates pepsin, so we can break down proteins, stimulates gastrin, and breaks down large proteins in food. However, most people in our culture do not produce enough stomach acid. Do you feel bloated after meals? Do you experience heartburn or indigestion? Stress, alcohol consumption, processed foods, and over the counter drugs all contribute to low stomach acid. People who experience heartburn and bloating actually have low stomach acid! Taking antacids can help temporarily. However, they make the problem worse. Food then passes out of the stomach undigested, and you are not getting the nutrients from those foods.



How can you increase your stomach acid?

- One gentle way to increase stomach acid production is to take a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar in a little water about 15 minutes before each meal.
- Another gentle way is to drink a little lemon water 15 minutes before meals
- A third gentle way is to take a [drop of bitters](#) on your tongue right before each meal. Bitters stimulate the flowing of digestive juices.
- If you feel your stomach acid is still very low and are struggling with heartburn and bloating, it is best to work with a Nutritional Therapist or Registered Dietitian to increase your stomach acid through the use of HCL supplementation.

Digestion continues into the small intestine:

In the small intestines, food passes from the stomach into the small intestines. The small intestine is where nutrients from food are absorbed into the bloodstream. The small intestine also helps stimulate the gallbladder to produce bile. Bile is like a river of juices that emulsifies and helps to digest fats. Often times due to poor fat choices and low-fat diets (low fat diets do not trigger the release of bile), bile becomes thick and sticky. Lack of bile leads to the improper absorption of fats. This is one reason many of us have an essential fatty acid deficiency.

How can I get my bile flowing?

- Increase healthy fats in the diet, including saturated fats such as ghee, coconut oil, duck fat, tallow, lard, and palm oil.
- Stop consuming vegetable oils and hydrogenated oils, which make the bile thick and sticky.
- Consume beets! Beets help to thin the bile and get it flowing again.
- Consume fermented foods! Fermented foods contain enzymes to help break down and digest fats.

When undigested food enters the small intestine, it is more difficult to absorb nutrients from these foods. If you are struggling with bowel issues, autoimmune disease, skin conditions, or other health concerns, there is a good chance that you could use some gut healing! The junctions in the small intestines are slightly permeable, just enough so nutrients from food can pass through into the bloodstream. However, many Americans have hyperpermeable junctions in their gut. Larger proteins can pass through these junctions, contributing to what is known as "leaky gut syndrome."

Many things contribute to leaky gut such as:

- The Standard American Diet (SAD)
- Alcohol use
- Over the counter and prescription drugs
- Stress
- Food sensitivities
- ...and more



What can I do to help heal and seal my small intestine, so I can get more nutrients from the foods I eat?

- Drink mineral rich bone broth. Bone broth is very healing and contains high amounts of easily digested vitamins and minerals
- Eat fermented foods. Fermented foods contain high levels of probiotics and enzymes. Probiotics help to regulate the junctions in the gut, while enzymes help to digest food better
- Consider taking L-glutamine. L-glutamine is an amino acid that helps to reestablish a mucous layer in the small intestines. Work with a Nutritional Therapist or Registered Dietitian to determine the right amount to take

Where does food go after the intestines?

It comes out as poop! Our bowel movements can tell us a great deal about how our digestion is working. If you are not having regular bowel movements (1-3 per day) you may be constipated.

What do I do if I am constipated?

- Drink ½ your body weight in ounces of water each day.
- Eat vegetables as the majority of your meals, including starchy vegetables.
- Eat fermented foods, such as sauerkraut, fermented vegetables, and kombucha tea.
- Consider supplementing with a quality probiotic daily. We recommend [Prescript Assist](#) probiotics
- Consider supplementing with magnesium daily to help gut motility. We recommend [Natural Calm](#), consult with a Nutritional Therapist or Registered Dietitian for proper dosing.

We hope this guide is helpful in determining if your digestion is working properly, and where it could use improvement. If you have severe digestive issues such as chronic heartburn, diarrhea, chronic constipation, or irritable bowel issues, consult a Nutritional Therapist or Registered Dietitian (we have both in this program!) to work with you on finding out what is going on foundationally, and come up with a plan to heal!

