

Support for the Digestive System

Give thanks.

Take time to acknowledge and give thanks for your food and the abundance of the earth. Set the mood to enjoy what you eat, even if it is a quick light snack. We digest better when we are relaxed; being thankful and enjoying ourselves make us more relaxed.

Relax while you eat, and take time to digest.

Sit down to eat, and take a few deep breaths before you eat.

Eat in a relaxed environment that is quiet and focused. Do not eat when you are upset.

Cook for yourself as often as possible.

Smell your food; this activates digestion.

Chew slowly and mindfully.

Eat regularly and don't let yourself get overhungry. Feeling like you are starving activates the sympathetic nervous system, and we do not digest when we are in a sympathetic state.

Don't eat while you are driving or in front of the computer; take time to eat and digest food and life.

Respect energetics and your body temperature.

Your stomach functions best at body temperature, about 98 degrees Fahrenheit – so food consumed around this temperature is easiest to digest.

Avoid cold and iced drinks while eating.

Avoid excessively hot drinks.

Don't drink too much liquid with meals. Limit yourself to 8 ounces or less with meals.

Try to avoid liquid intake for half an hour before and after meals.

Avoid eating foods that are colder than room temperature.

Eat raw food seasonally.

Support your beneficial bacteria.

Eat fermented foods! That's aged cheese like parmesan, yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut (and other unpasteurized vegetable ferments), miso, fermented pickles, umeboshi plums, and unpasteurized vinegar.

Take probiotic supplements when needed.

Eat organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs unwashed, when appropriate.

Eat enzyme-rich foods.

[[Explain why enzyme-rich foods are helpful? You haven't mentioned enzymes yet.]]Enzyme-rich foods include:

- Raw, whole, fresh foods (enzymes are destroyed between 115 and 120 degrees)
- Sprouted and soaked nuts and seed
- Naturally fermented foods (raw, unpasteurized)

Eat and drink whole foods.

Avoid packaged, processed foods that have additives and preservatives.

Avoid all enriched grains, meat substitutes, pasteurized dairy products, and artificial flavors and colors (read labels and watch drinks).

Eliminate corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, and artificial sweeteners from your diet.

Eliminate hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils from your diet.

Make your food count! Support absorption.

Don't eat too late at night; we have less digestive fire after the sun goes down.

Don't lie down or sleep right after eating.

Exercise regularly.

Eat meals regularly.

Take a short walk after big meals and gently rub your belly from right to left if needed.

Cook with carminative spices.

Enjoy bitter foods before eating as an appetizer or aperitif.

Drink digestive teas before or after eating.

(ALL THIS, PLUS EVERYTHING ELSE ON THE HANDOUT TOO! :)

Combine foods thoughtfully.

Every culture has different food combining practices; in general, the simpler your food combinations are, the better your body can digest.

Eat for your constitution.

Eat foods appropriate to the season and the climate where you are.

What types of foods are easiest to digest and make you feel most energized and nourished?

Eat foods prepared in ways that make them easy to digest.

Easy-to-digest foods include:

- Unpasteurized dairy
- Sprouted and fermented foods
- Cooked foods (especially slow-cooked meats)
- Marinated or dressed salads and raw vegetables
- Soaked grains, nuts, and seeds
- Bone broths (gelatin)

Enjoy bitters.

The bitter taste stimulates digestion via a reflux in the taste buds. So, include bitter herbs and foods in your diet. When appropriate, take 5 to 10 drops of a bitter tincture before meals. Or eat a bitter green salad before meals to stimulate digestion.

Include carminatives.

Include carminative spices in your cooking and use them as a garnish. Keep some of your favorites on the tables to use as a condiment.

Have an after-meal digestive tea.

Hot tea after a meal aids digestion. Some of my favorite combinations are:

- Fennel, orange peel, and ginger

- Fennel, cinnamon, and orange peel
- Peppermint, sage, and lavender
- Chamomile and peppermint
- Lemon balm and lavender
- Lemon verbena, chamomile, and rose

Support proper elimination.

Make time for a full evacuation at least once per day.

Listen to your body—when you gotta go, go.

Eat properly prepared high-fiber whole foods.

Stay hydrated.

Manage your stress levels.

Include carminatives in your diet.

Drink teas after larger meals.

Exercise regularly.

Pay attention to potential food allergies.

Allergies to food can be genetic or can occur from improperly digesting something for many years until the body recognizes it as foreign and develops a negative defensive reaction to that food. Food allergies may result in a buildup of undigested food in the GI tract, leading to further problems with absorption, toxicity, and immune deficiency. To avoid developing food allergies, eat pure, whole foods that are easy to digest and properly prepared.

Symptoms of food allergies can include gas, bloating, chronic constipation or diarrhea, skin rashes or other chronic issues, seasonal allergies, and weak immunity.

Avoid food additives and other substances that disrupt the health of intestinal flora.

Avoid chemicals, herbicides and pesticides, nitrates, sulfates, preservatives, dyes, MSG, genetically engineered food, alcohol, caffeine, sugar, chlorine, fluoride, and stress.

Over-the-counter and prescription medication, oral contraceptives, and antibiotics all compromise the health of intestinal flora and should only be used when necessary.