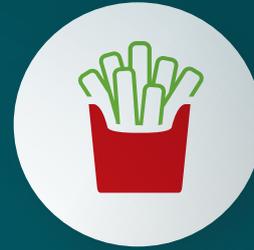


The Nuffield Health topic 4 - Digestive Health.

Digestive Health

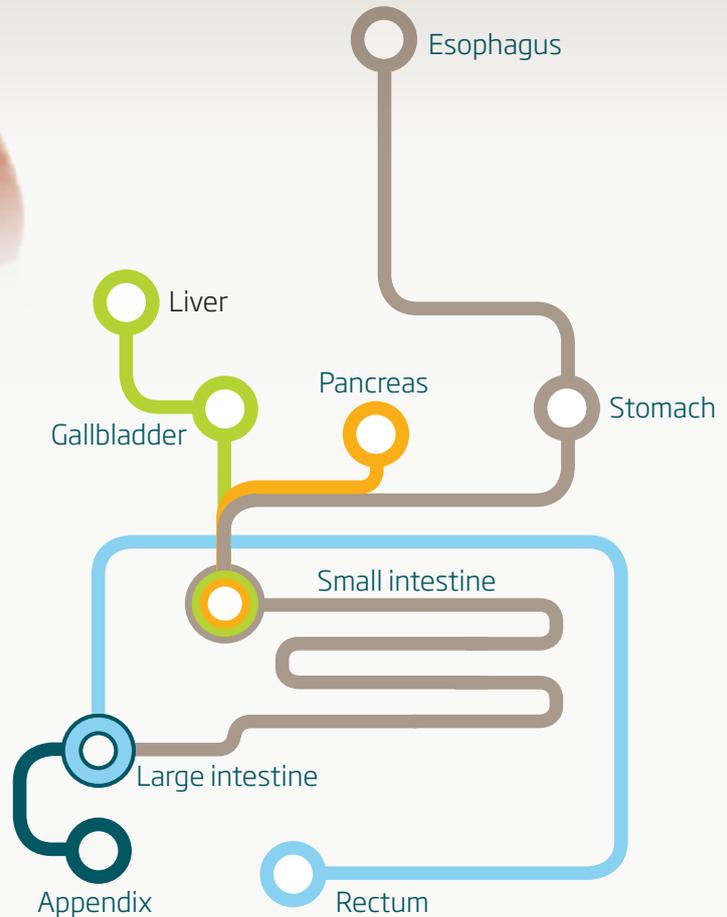




The digestive or intestinal tract is often referred to as the “gateway to health” due to the fundamental role it plays in helping us to both absorb essential nutrients from the foods we eat and to process potentially harmful toxins and eliminate these from the body.

Understanding the digestive system

The digestive system is made up of a large number of individual organs, with each playing a key role in a specific stage of digestion. How well each of these organs operates in its own right, influences the speed and efficiency of the entire digestive system.



Identifying signs of digestive disruption:

The health of the digestive system can impact not only on how effectively the body digests food, but can also affect both physical and mental wellbeing. There is a close interplay between the digestive system, the immune system and the nervous system and hence it is possible for a poor functioning digestive system to impact upon health far beyond the recognised symptoms of disrupted digestion.

Optimising digestive function is one of the most effective starting points in improving overall health status.

Obvious signs of poor digestion		Not so obvious signs of poor digestion	
• Sore mouth/gums/tongue	• IBS, IBD, Ulcerative colitis	• Skin problems (eczema, hives, itching)	• Inability to concentrate
• Indigestion/acid reflux	• Coeliac, Crohn's disease	• Thrush/athletes foot	• ADHD/autism
• Ulcers	• Constipation &/or diarrhoea	• Inflammation i.e. arthritis	• Migraines/headaches
• Wind/burping/bloating/flatulence	• Cancer	• Lack of energy /fatigue	• Muscular pain
		• Depression/anxiety	• Premenstrual syndrome
		• Food cravings	• Asthma / Allergies

Top tips for digestive health

01

Take your time

Make time for eating and avoid eating on the go or when you're under stress.

02

Chew your food

Ideally 20 times before swallowing. This stimulates the secretion of enzymes that begin the digestive process.

03

Ditch the caffeine

Caffeine hampers the absorption of vital nutrients and disrupts the delicate balance of bacteria in the bowel.

04

Limit alcohol

Too much alcohol places a strain on the liver and can lead to excess inflammation along the lining of the gut.

05

Watch your sugar intake

An excess of sugar in the diet can lead to a yeast overgrowth in the bowel.

06

Avoid eating an excess of wheat

such as breads, pasta and pastries.

10

Eat more prebiotics

Foods such as onion, garlic, bananas, sweetcorn and Jerusalem artichoke are all classed as prebiotics and help to feed the balance of good bacteria in the bowel.

09

Avoid an excess of red or processed meat

instead replace with white meat, oily fish and vegetarian sources of protein such as tofu.

08

Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and raw foods

as these will supply vital nutrients and fibre to support digestive processes.

07

Try herbal teas

such as fennel, peppermint and camomile as these support digestion and have a calming effect on the bowel.

