



WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

DIGESTIVE HEALTH

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HEALTH AND DISEASE STARTS IN THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

Our digestive system is an intricate and delicate body system that plays a role so much greater than just digesting our food! The digestive system also supports our mood, immunity, hormones, sleep, happiness, energy levels, detoxification and so much more! When the digestive system is unhappy, we start to see symptoms of unwell develop in the body.

Given the way in which the digestive system interacts with various other organs, body systems and cycles, it's easy to see how when it is unhappy, it has the potential to wreak havoc on the entire body.

MINDFUL EATING

On an average day, eating usually happens hard and fast, we munch on food as we drive, slurp down smoothies running out the door to work and pick up sushi between meetings – we have lost the art of eating consciously and our body misses it.

Mindful eating starts before the food hits our lips; it's in the process of picking out a recipe, choosing the ingredients, chopping and cooking the food, all before the actual eating begins.

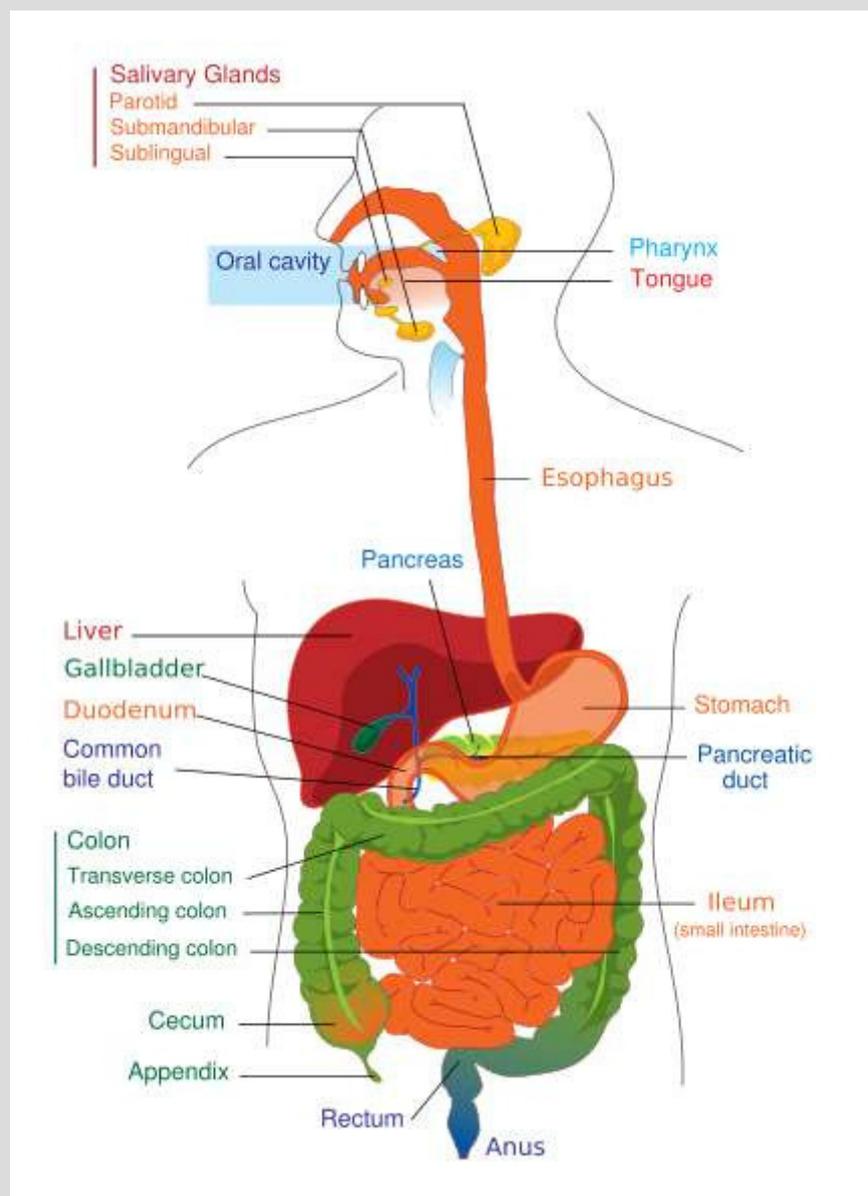
This way of eating also encourages the start of the body's digestive processes; the smell and excitement of food to come starts to increase our gastric juices so that we can break down food more effectively and better utilise the nutrients. Looking at cookbooks and finding recipes that make us happy helps to get the digestive processes started too!

Activity: During your next meal time, stop to look at your food. What different colours, textures and shapes do you see? Do you see the individual ingredients? Each with their own tastes and flavour? How do those ingredients taste by themselves and how do they dance together?

THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

The short version is that our digestive system starts at our mouth and ends at our, well end – but the reality is so much more! It's a complex system of organs, microbiome, cells, cleaners and sweepers helping to move food through our body – absorbing nutrients and removing waste.

It is a delicate dance from the moment that your body smells food, each system playing a different, but vital role. How we break down food and eliminate waste influences how we feel, our energy levels, the appearance of our skin and hair and our mood (and everything else in between)!



THE POOP

If you have been to a naturopath or nutritionist you know that we are a little obsessed with poop – and for a very good reason! It is such a fantastic indication of our health!

The time it takes for food to go from one end to the other (also known as transit time), the colour, shape and smell of your (hopefully) daily bowel movements are all indicators of your health.

It's important to sneak a peak before you flush and check out what your body is trying to tell you. In general, a healthy poop is once a day for women, twice or thrice for men and is free from pain, cramping, highly offensive odor and feels like you have finished; that there is nothing left for later.

Signs of a healthy poop;

- \\ Easy evacuation of the bowels free from pain and cramping
- \\ Daily movement for women - twice daily for men
- \\ Free from an offensive smell, marks on the toilet
- \\ sausage in shape and brown in colour

Signs of an unhealthy poop:

- \\ small hard pebbles or loose and liquid in texture
- \\ Black in colour indicates blood in stool and must see a GP
- \\ Pain, discomfort when passing a stool
- \\ Feeling that you need to go back for more

Activity: Next time you head to the loo for a number two, take the time and sneak a peek. What colour is it? Is there any undigested food? (corn is often the culprit) are there any marks after you flush? Start listening to what your digestive system is telling you.

SUPPORTING THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

There are many ways to support the digestive system and digestive health, again it goes back to basics and keeping it simple. Our body and our digestive system love wholefood ingredients, a lifestyle bursting with fresh (and seasonal) produce with a balance of macronutrients and micronutrients.

FOODS TO SUPPORT DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Seasonal fresh produce:

Wholefood, fresh produce is packed full of gut loving (and whole body loving) benefits! Enjoying a wide variety of produce; different colours, shapes and sizes with varying vitamins, mineral, antioxidants and phytonutrients! Our body and our environment is rather special; in that the nutrients we need during Winter are found in the produce grown in Winter! I know! Who would have thought it! Buying local or at least from Australia all helps with higher nutrient levels and lower food miles.

Bitter foods:

Our digestive system and liver love, love, loves bitter foods! Bitter foods such as rocket and dandelion help to stimulate gastric acids and support nutrient absorption, while also supporting waste removal.

Fibre:

Fibre helps to feed our good bacteria, moves waste out of the body, pulls waste such as cholesterol and excess hormones out of the body. We get fibre naturally from our wholefood fruits and vegetables but also from things such as legumes, nuts, seeds, psyllium husks and LSA.

Resistance Starch:

Our gut and our microbiome are slightly obsessed with resistance starch; it is food for happy gut bacteria. Simple things such as green bananas and cooked potatoes; that are eaten cold are great options. .

Fermented foods:

Almost every culture has their own version of fermented foods; kim chi, sauerkraut, pickles, kombucha, kefir, etc. The recipe changes from location to location but the benefits are similar. Often used as a way to preserve foods during the harsh cold winters these foods also have a beneficial role on the digestive system, gut health, immune health and so much more!

Slow cooked foods:

As well as doing everything for us, our body also uses energy to warm up our food so that it can be absorbed. Enjoying slow-cooked and warm foods gives our digestive system a helping hand, supports nutrient absorption and supports the warmth of the digestive system.

Filtered water:

Ever had a day where you're on the go and have no time for water – and can't poop the next day? Water plays a massive role within digestive health. We need water to help push matter through the digestive system as well as support nutrient absorption. Not to mention water makes us feel good, look younger and live better.

Activity: How many cups of veggies do you eat per day? Aim for 7-9 cups of fresh seasonal veggies! Go for a challenge and do a full week with 9 cups each day and track your mood, energy and sleep quality.

SIMPLE STEPS FOR WELLNESS

1. Eat what grows
2. Eat more greens
3. Move your body in a way that makes you happy
4. Make time for you
5. Get a little sunshine each day

NOURISHING RECIPES

ALYCE'S KIMCHI

1 organic wombok / Chinese cabbage
2 carrots, grated/thinly sliced
3 shallots, chopped
2 – 3 fresh large chilies
5cm fresh ginger root
1 large turmeric root
1 teaspoon of organic turmeric powder
1 tablespoon fish sauce (or pinch of dulse to keep it vegan)
a generous sprinkle of macrobiotic sea salt + extra salt
splash of water

METHOD

1. Using a stick blender or high-performance blender – process all the spices and set aside. can also do by hand if needed.
2. Using a sharp knife or mandolin thinly slice the cabbage and place into a large mixing bowl. Add a 2 tablespoons of salt and massage the cabbage.
3. Add in the carrots, shallots and any other veggies you may like.
4. Pour over chili paste and using your hands (with gloves on) massage into the cabbage until soft.
5. Place into serialized glass jar and store in a warm place for 1 – 2 weeks (may need more time in winter and less time in summer)
When ready enjoy topped over salad, eggs or any meal – or straight from the jar!

If you see any mould, its time to throw it out and try again

KATE'S SAUERKRAUT

1 red cabbage

1.5 tablespoons good quality sea salt

1 tablespoon of cumin, caraway or fennel seeds

EQUIPMENT

1 large chopping board

large ceramic or glass bowl

chef's knife

large glass jar

METHOD

1. Sterilise your equipment by pouring boiling water over each item, then set aside to air-dry.
2. Heat a small frying pan over medium heat and add seeds of choice to toast for about 90 seconds - you'll know they're ready because you'll hear them pop!
3. Finely slice the cabbage with a knife, or use a mandolin, or even the slice setting on a food processor. Transfer cabbage to the bowl and add the salt.
4. Massage the salt into the cabbage for a good 5-10 minutes. This allows the cabbage to release its natural juices that act to ferment and preserve the sauerkraut.
5. Pack the cabbage into the jar, a handful at a time. Use your fist to pack the cabbage down in between each handful, to prevent air pockets from forming. Repeat until all the cabbage is in the jar.
6. Pour any remaining liquid into the jar, ensuring the cabbage is fully submerged by liquid.
7. Seal the lid and store in a cool, dark place to ferment for at least two weeks.

AYURVEDIC KITCHARI

2 tablespoons coconut oil or ghee
2 tablespoons coriander seeds
2 tablespoons cumin seeds
2 tablespoons fennel seeds
1 brown onion, diced
3 crushed garlic cloves
2 tablespoons minced ginger
1 tablespoon minced fresh or ground turmeric
1 stick of cinnamon
1 teaspoon good quality sea salt

1 cup split red lentils
1 cup mung beans
1 cup basmati rice
1 kilo of chopped vegetables (sweet potato, carrots, zucchini, turnips)

2 litres of water
juice of 1 lemon
1 bunch coriander, finely chopped

METHOD

1. Combine lentils, mung beans and rice together in a large jar or bowl. Cover with filtered water and let soak overnight.
2. Rinse legumes and rice well in a sieve, then set aside.
3. Heat coconut oil in a large saucepan to a medium heat, then add the coriander, cumin and fennel seeds to the pan, and listen for when you hear them pop.
4. Add the onion, garlic other spices and salt to the pan, along with the ginger and turmeric and cook for 1-2 minutes.

5. Add the vegetables, soaked legumes and rice to the pan, stir, then pour in all the water. Bring saucepan to boil, then reduce to simmer and cook for 40-50 minutes. At this stage, all the water should be absorbed, and the lentils and rice will have softened to a chunky porridge-like consistency.

6. Once cooked, add the lemon juice and coriander, stir and adjust seasonings as needed.

*You may need to add more water if you like a thinner consistency kitchari.

CRUNCHY SAVOURY TOPPING

1 tablespoon coriander seeds
1/2 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup almonds, roughly chopped
1/2 cup shredded coconut
1/4 cup sesame seeds
1 teaspoon turmeric
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon chilli flakes

METHOD

1. Place coriander seeds in a large frying pan over medium heat and toast for 1 minute. Add sunflower seeds and sesame seeds and toast until golden brown. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
2. Place frying pan back on the heat and add coconut and almonds to toast - you'll know they're ready when the coconut is golden. Transfer to the bowl along with the seeds.
3. Add turmeric, salt and chilli to the bowl and stir to combine the ingredients well and allow the flavours to meld together.
4. Transfer to an air-tight container or jar.

COCONUT + CUCUMBER RAITA

1/2 cup coconut yoghurt
1 grated cucumber
zest of 1 lemon
1/2 teaspoon sea salt

METHOD

1. Combine all ingredients in a small bowl and stir to combine.

ROCKET + BASIL PESTO

2 bunches rocket
1/2 bunch basil
1/2 cup macadamias
1/3 cup olive oil
juice of 1 lemon
1 clove garlic
1/2 teaspoon sea salt

METHOD

1. Pick leaves of rocket and basil off stems and transfer to a blender or food processor.
2. Add all other ingredients to the blender or food processor and blitz to combine.

* We made our pesto in a Vitamix blender, hence its smooth consistency. Using a food processor may produce chunkier results (which will also be delicious).

PLACES TO FIND DELICIOUS INSPIRATION

Now that you have the fermenting bug its time to get into the kitchen! These are the places we love to look and gather inspiration

AHARA HEALTH : <http://www.aharahealth.com.au/>

Nourishing Club : <https://nourishingclub.com/>

The Cultured Club : <http://theculturedclub.com/>

Food by Holly Davis : <https://www.foodbyhollydavis.com/>

The Healthy Chef : <https://www.thehealthychef.com/>

Green Kitchen Stories : <http://www.greenkitchenstories.com/>

