



Give Your Gut Some Love

CHALLENGE

Practice healthy habits to improve digestion

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

- 1 Read "Give Your Gut Some Love."
- 2 Practice healthy habits to improve digestion on at least 22 days this month.
- 3 Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



Joey Chestnut likes to eat...a lot. When he went off to college at San Jose State University, he just about majored in eating.

He scarfed down 6.3 pounds of asparagus in 11.5 minutes. He munched his way through 32.5 grilled cheese sandwiches in 10 minutes. And he was still hungry.

He ate waffles, mini-burgers, sausages, pizza, and chicken wings. He drank a gallon of milk in 41 seconds. He even ate a 72-ounce steak, salad, baked potato, shrimp cocktail, and bread roll in less than 9 minutes. And he ate a lot of hot dogs (70 dogs with buns in 10 minutes).

He told reporters that he likes being a competitive eater. It "challenges both my body and my mind." He didn't mention any digestive problems that might follow.

Maybe you don't eat like Joey Chestnut. But chowing down on the wrong foods can lead to stomach aches, heart burn, health problems, and a lot of time in the bathroom. And it doesn't have to be that way. Healthy eating and lifestyle habits can improve digestion and your health. Take the month-long Health Challenge and Give Your Gut Some Love.

Time for a Gut Check: How much do you know about your eating habits and digestion?¹

- | | T | F |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> It takes about 12 to 24 hours to digest an average meal. |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Your mouth makes about 2 cups of saliva a day to help digest food. |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Fiber is a natural laxative and aids in digestion. |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking water does not help your body digest and breakdown food. |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> The average adult eats about 2,000 pounds of food a year. |

How did you do? (Answers below). Your mouth makes about 6 cups of saliva a day to help digest food. And drinking water **does** help breakdown food and aid in digestion. Your food choices and eating habits can have a big impact on digestion and your health. In some cases, you may need to avoid certain foods or see a doctor for help with digestive problems.

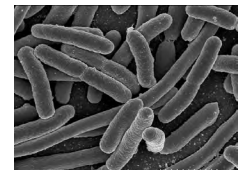
Answers: 1. True. 2. False. 3. True. 4. False. 5. True.

A Healthy Gut

Eat food. Digest it. Absorb the nutrients. Makes sense, right? But are you eating foods high in nutrients? Or does your typical meal plan include pizza, burgers, fries, soda, and desserts? What you eat can have a big impact on digestion and your overall health.

There are at least 1,000 kinds of microbes in your gut. As a group, they are called *microbiota*, or forms of bacteria. (You may know it by the term "gut flora.") It helps prevent infections, reduce inflammation, support the immune system, and give your body the nutrients it needs.³

7 foods to supercharge your gut bacteria
<http://tinyurl.com/obx3j7y>



E. coli is part of your gut flora.

Healthy Gut Habits

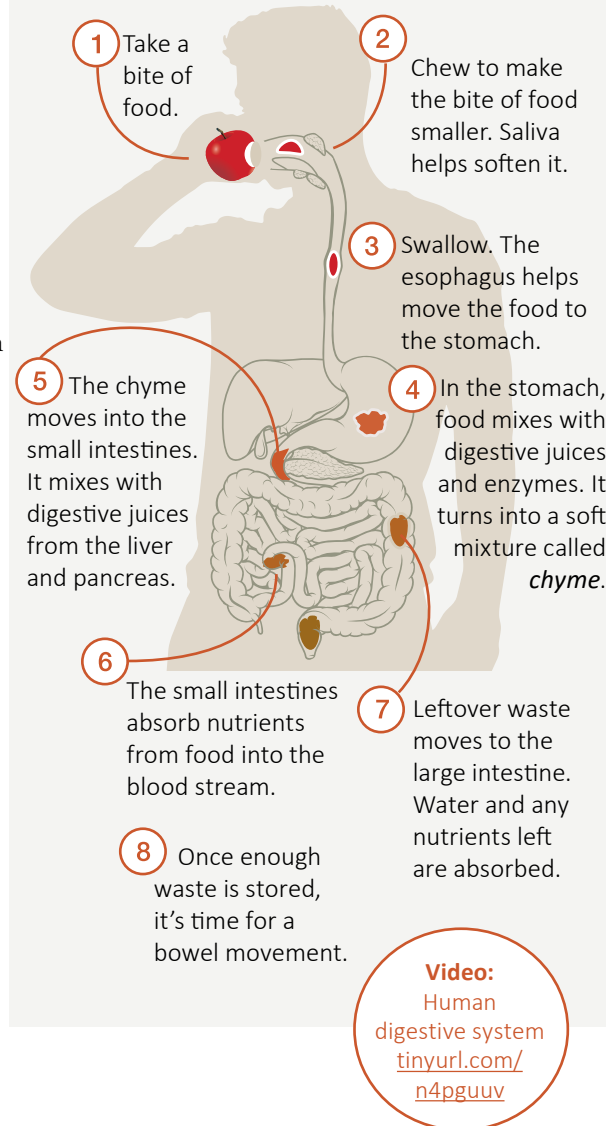
Your food choices impact your gut health. So can other factors like stress, smoking, lack of exercise, being overweight, and gut-related diseases.

If you want to keep your gut happy and be healthy, here are some things you can do:

- **Don't smoke.** Research shows that smoking prevents some forms of good bacteria your gut needs to promote health.⁴ If you smoke, quit. Try a mobile app, tobacco cessation product, or ask your doctor for help to quit smoking.
- **Reduce stress.** When you're stressed out, your gut isn't happy. In fact, studies show that stress can interfere with digestion. It can even lead to serious gut-health diseases, heart burn, and other problems.⁵ Need to reduce stress? Practice deep breathing. Try yoga or meditation. Go for a walk. Talk to a friend or counselor. Do something you enjoy.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** It's almost a chicken or the egg scenario. Being overweight can lead to gut-health problems. And gut-health problems can contribute to obesity.⁶ If you need to lose weight, improve your diet and be more active. If you're already at a healthy weight, keep it that way.
- **Be more active.** Health experts recommend getting 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. It's a great way to burn extra calories. And it helps strengthen your heart, lungs and muscles. Being active also helps improve the microbiota in your gut.⁷

What is Digestion?

It's how your body gets nutrients from the food you eat. Here's how it works:²



- **Avoid or limit red meat.** Research shows that eating red meat is linked to diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer, and age-related memory loss. It can also damage the large intestine and cause cramps, diarrhea, and constipation.⁸
- **Drink more water.** Pass too much gas when you were a kid, and your mom probably told you to drink more water. She was right. Drinking water helps break down food. Water helps your body absorb nutrients. It also helps soften stool to make a bowel movement easier. Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses a day.
- **Eat a variety of healthy foods.** Be sure to have fruits, vegetables, and whole grains each day. They're high in fiber, vitamins, and nutrients that support gut health and digestion.⁹ Try oatmeal, berries, quinoa, onions, Greek yogurt, legumes, bananas, and leafy greens.

Quiz:
What do you know about the digestive system?
tinyurl.com/lkef3yl

Wonder how you can improve digestion and your health? Give your gut some love. Eat healthy food, drink more water, and make smart lifestyle choices. You'll feel better and be healthier.

References (accessed on April 17, 2017)

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3. Bischoff, S. (2011). 'Gut health': A new objective in medicine? *BMC Medicine*, 9:24. doi: 10.1186/1741-7015-9-24.
4. Biedermann, L., et al. (2013). Smoking cessation induces profound changes in the composition of the intestinal microbiota in humans. *PLOS One*, 8(3):e59260. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0059260.
5. Konturek, P.C., et al. (2011). Stress and the gut: Pathophysiology, clinical consequences, diagnostic approach, and treatment options. *Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*, 62(6):591-599.
6. Harakeh, S. (2016). Gut microbiota: A contributing factor to obesity. *Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology*, 6:95. doi: 10.3389/fcimb.2016.00095
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8. Yin, C., et al. (2017). Meat intake and risk of diverticulitis among men. *Gut*. doi:10.1136/gutjnl-2016-313082.
9. Jardine, M. (2017). Seven foods to supercharge your gut bacteria. [Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine](#).



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Instructions

- 1 Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
- 2 Record the number of days you practiced healthy habits to improve digestion.
- 3 Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you make to help you form healthy-gut habits.
- 4 At the end of the month, total the number of days you practiced healthy habits to improve digestion. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	
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_____ Number of days this month I practiced healthy habits to improve digestion

_____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____