

# Improve Digestion



## CHALLENGE

Practice healthy habits to improve gut health

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Improve Digestion."
2. Practice healthy habits to improve gut health.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires



### *When do we eat?*

It's a question the comic-book detective Dick Tracy gets asked incessantly by his unlikely sidekick... The Kid.

The Kid is ravenous. And they hit Mike's Diner as often as possible in between car chases, crime bosses, and old-school gangsters.

The Kid gulps down soda. He shovels in three-bean chili.

He eats mountains of ice-cream sundaes loaded with toppings. And he'll try anything else on the menu that fits the description of salty, savoury, and sweet.

But if you're eating like The Kid and loading up like every meal might be your last, your gut might have a few things to say about that.

## QUIZ: Give Yourself a Gut Check

How much do you know about your eating habits and digestion?



### T F

1.   The average adult eats about 2,000 pounds of food a year.
2.   Fiber is a natural laxative and aids in digestion.
3.   Your mouth makes about 2 cups of saliva a day to help digest food.
4.   Drinking water does not help your body digest and break down food.
5.   It takes about 12 to 24 hours to digest an average meal.

How did you do? (Answers below). Your mouth makes about 6 cups of saliva a day to help digest food. Drinking water does help break down 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. True, 3. True, 4. False, 5. True.*

You know, like...Burp! Belch! Gurgle! Blah!

If you're eating too much too often, or not eating enough healthy foods, chances are pretty good your gut might not always agree with your food choices.

Chowing down on the wrong foods can lead to stomach aches, heartburn, health problems, and a lot of time in the bathroom. Been there, done that?

If you've ever experienced digestion issues or poor gut health, you probably know the feeling. And it doesn't have to be that way. Healthy eating and lifestyle habits can improve digestion and your health.

Take the month-long challenge to Improve Digestion.

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

# Chew on THIS for Better Health

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.

**Did you know?...** 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.”). A healthy gut and good digestion can help prevent...<sup>1</sup>

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Certain types of cancer
- Inflammation
- Heart disease
- And other health problems

## 6 Healthy-Gut Habits to Improve Digestion

Want to prevent feeling bloated, sick to your stomach, and improve your health? It's not just about what you eat. Other lifestyle factors like stress, smoking, lack of exercise, being overweight, and gut-related diseases can impact your gut and overall health.

**Here are 6 things you can do to improve digestion:**

**1 Don't smoke**  
Research shows that smoking prevents some forms of good bacteria your gut needs to promote health.<sup>2</sup>

If you smoke, quit. Try a mobile app, tobacco cessation product, or ask your doctor for help to quit smoking. If you don't smoke, don't start.

**2 Manage stress in healthy ways**  
When you're stressed out, your gut isn't happy. In fact, studies show that stress can interfere with digestion.<sup>3</sup> It can even lead to serious gut-health diseases, heartburn, and other problems.

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.

**3 Maintain a healthy weight**  
Or lose weight if you need to. 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.

Keep your gut in check  
<https://tinyurl.com/wpfwun6t>



**4 Be more active**  
Health experts recommend getting 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.

Walk, jog, bike, or hit the gym. It's a great way to burn extra calories. And it helps strengthen your heart, lungs and muscles.

Research shows regular exercise also helps improve the microbiota in your gut.<sup>5</sup>

**5 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.<sup>6</sup>

**6 Eat a variety of healthy foods**  
Eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grain. They're high in fiber, vitamins, and nutrients that support gut health and digestion.<sup>7</sup>

Try foods like oatmeal, whole-grain cereal, berries, quinoa, onions, Greek yogurt, legumes, bananas, and leafy greens.

Hungry for better health? Start by making smart choices about your diet and lifestyle to improve digestion and gut health. prevent weight gain.<sup>5</sup> Just don't overdo it. Some dried fruits contain as many calories as a candy bar (250 calories), and one banana contains about 100 calories.

Feed your gut for better health  
<https://tinyurl.com/53x5bvcd>

## References

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# Improve Digestion

**CHALLENGE**  
Practice healthy habits to improve gut health

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Practice healthy habits to improve digestion daily.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to improve gut health and digestion.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. 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 habits to improve digestion  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_