

## Digestion 101

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The digestive tract is one of the hardest working systems in our bodies. It is constantly being put to work breaking down fats, carbohydrates and proteins. However, over the past several decades, the popularity of fatty and sugary processed foods in our diet has placed additional strain on our digestive tracts. Because of the addition of these unbalanced foods and lifestyle factors including stress and improper eating habits, we often turn to prescription and over the counter drugs to help relieve our symptoms of gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, flatulence, indigestion and reflux.

The good news is that many of these common symptoms can be lessened or eliminated by incorporating a few simple changes into your day.

### **DO NOT DRINK WITH YOUR MEALS**

Drinking with meals dilutes the hydrochloric acid and digestive enzymes in your stomach, causing impaired digestion. If you need to take medication or moisten your mouth, drink no more than 4 ounces of room temperature water.

### **BE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR PORTION SIZES**

Over consumption can be attributed to indigestion. Our brain signals the feeling of fullness about 10-15 minutes after we're actually full. Do not continue to eat until you feel full. Eat slowly, main meals should take about 20 minutes to consume.

### **CHEW YOUR FOOD COMPLETELY**

Incomplete chewing and talking while eating can cause premature swallowing which could lead to digestive upset (bloating, gas, cramps) Also, our bodies are not designed to digest large pieces of food, this puts a strain on our digestive tract.

### **RELAX WHILE EATING YOUR MEAL**

Eating when you are rushed causes stress to the body and consequently slows down the digestive process. Give yourself enough time to sit down and enjoy a meal or snack in a relaxing environment.

### **CONSIDER PROBIOTICS**

Also known as “friendly bacteria”, these microorganisms are thought to break down fibers and large molecules allowing our bodies to assimilate nutrients more efficiently. They live in the gastrointestinal tract and are often associated with helping to relieve some digestive upset.

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