

## Digestion: Key to health

### Description

Gentle Reader,

Here we are in a New Year. I hear murmuring around me about changes in eating, in exercise, in work habits. People everywhere seek balance in their lives, which seem to be uncontrollably hectic. We interrupt ourselves and forget what we hoped to accomplish in the next hour. There is no peace.

This time of year solutions abound. Your favorite person on Facebook asks everyone to comment on their resolutions and past successes. The radio and TV, pod casts and news articles have the answer if you would just listen, please. Of course, I am going to recommend a better diet, one with supplements. Ha! It just could be that **digestion is the key to health**.

Years ago I learned a very important lesson that relaxed my need to save the world all by myself. Food, diet and nutrition are one small part of the total health picture. A wise woman, Angela Arriens, lectured on the 8 common threads across all cultures that lead to a health filled life. As a cross-cultural anthropologist, she knew what she was talking about from years of research.

It turns out that our diet *per se* is only one/eighth of the picture. Other factors—exercise, spiritual practice, friends and relationships, music and color (art), and deep rest are the aspects I remember to this day, 24 years after hearing her speak. What a relief to know what a small part I might play in advising someone's health picture. My supplement program is not the key ingredient to a healthy life, just one aspect.

Having said that, I want to suggest that *digestion is a key to health*, one of the most important aspects of nourishing our bodies. We can eat whole foods and never contaminate our bodies with junk food, but if we don't have a functional digestive system, we may still miss the nutrients we need. If you struggle with acid reflux or bloating and gas after eating, perhaps your digestive system needs some fine-tuning. If you suffer from arthritis, joint pain, or are developing spinal stenosis and osteoporosis, it could be that your nutrients are not doing their job in the body.

## Goal of Digestion

Take whole foods and turn them into energy and nutrients to allow the body to function, grow, and repair itself. When we swallow food we have chewed in the mouth, the esophagus carries the mass to the stomach. The first potential problem is the esophageal sphincter, or trap door that opens to let the slurry of food pass into the relaxed upper stomach. If the food is well-chewed, broken down evenly, the weight will easily open the trap door and the mass will pass into the stomach, letting the sphincter close behind it.

Chew your food well to aid this process.

Problems occur when we swallow chunks of food and the sphincter explodes open to let the material pass. Gas results. Flow back of acid results. In time, the sphincter wears out and doesn't close firmly or quickly.

In the stomach, an acid excretion further breaks down the food into the nutrients that can be absorbed by the tiny cilla in the small intestine. The stomach must be acidic to do this job or food continues down the digestive track un-dissolved and its nutrients are not absorbed.

When people feel discomfort from the escaping acidity up the esophagus into the mouth, called heart burn or acid reflux, the go-to remedy is an antacid. This might give a feeling of relief but the nutrients that need to be broken down into their absorbable components remain unavailable to our system. Antacids neutralize the acid the stomach provides to break down food.

Ideally, the stomach breaks down proteins. When this is not functioning as designed, a better intervention is to increase the stomach acid by drinking warm water and lemon juice first thing in the morning. Not coffee. And chew, chew, chew until the slurry that drops to the esophageal sphincter gently pushes the trap door open.

If there are foods that are hard for you to digest like dairy or refined carbohydrates (cookies, crackers, breads, cakes), the cruciferous foods—broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, or legumes—beans, you might need digestive enzymes to hit the stomach first thing before a meal to help break those things down. (This is where Shaklee's [EzGest](#) comes in handy, Take one before each meal.)

Most of us do not feel the peristalsis—muscle action of the small intestine as the slurry passes on down. When functioning normally, the digestive acids in the intestines break down starches, proteins and carbohydrates. Nutrients are absorbed into the body all along this passage as they become dissolved. Certain vitamins like the 8 different B vitamins become absorbed in specific areas of the intestines whether the B's come from foods or supplements. When not functioning normally, we feel gas and bloating moving down the intestinal track, often producing pain and even severe discomfort.

Finally, the pancreas introduces pancreatic acid to break down starches, fats and protein and the liver produces bile acid to further break down fats.

Alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream from the stomach. (Eating grapes and other high sugar content foods seems to have the same quick absorption rate for me, but I know there has to be some breakdown beyond the stomach acids. Still the same rush alcohol brings happens with these high sugar foods.)

The most common drugs prescribed by the medical profession and purchased over the counter are meant to correct mal-functions in this digestive process. They often eliminate the discomfort that occurs when the acids do not stay where they belong but they weaken natural digestion. It is possible to return your digestive system to a drug-free, comfortable state. It takes changing your eating habits. Since digestion is the key to health, you'll be glad you did.

These supplements help:

[Ez-Gest](#) digestive enzymes

[Optiflora pre- and probiotics](#) for maintaining a healthy digestive balance Healthy bacteria

[Herb Lax](#) for constipation and blood cleansing Healthy colon

[Fiber Advantage Bars](#), and [Fiber Tablets](#) Promote colon health and regularity

Changing your digestive process may be the key to losing weight along with the other benefits. Many of us take on the goal of getting to our healthy weight by summer time. The [Shaklee 180 Turnaround](#) is an excellent program to help you on your way. It could be that dealing with the digestive issues will make all the difference.

Remember, just losing 10 pounds will ease up on those aching joints, the arthritis in your knees, hips and feet. Could better digestion help? Didn't we say that digestion is the key to health?

Let us know your solutions to the struggles you have with digestion.

Be well, do well and Keep Moving,

Love,

Betsy

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