

Tips for Optimal Digestion



Photo: <https://nutritionstudies.org/colon-need-tune-simple-solution-better-gut-health/>

When we eat, our bodies must break down the food into nutrients and generate energy from it. Our internal organs, such as the stomach, intestines, liver, and pancreas, must be functioning properly to get the most from our food. When we are stressed or distracted, our digestive system gets put on pause. It's essential to be in a relaxed state for digestion to operate correctly and to maintain a happy and healthy body.

Try this exercise...

Take a few moments before a meal to prepare your body for digestion. Sit with your feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes and take three big deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Now picture a lemon, sitting on a table in front of you. Picture yourself taking a knife and cutting a slice from that lemon. Bite into the lemon slice.

Now open your eyes. What do you notice about how your body feels? Are you relaxed? Is your mouth watering?

Simply thinking about food can prepare your body to digest the food that you are about to eat. If you are salivating, you are ready to begin digesting food in your mouth. If you are in a relaxed state, the rest of your digestive system is ready to take on your meal.

Other tips for proper digestion:

- Limit distractions. Eating while we are working, watching TV, or driving takes away the focus from our brain on our digestion. Make sure your meal gets your full attention.
- Smell your food before you eat it. Take a few deep inhales and think about how it will taste. This helps to stimulate your brain to prepare for digestion.
- Slow down. Plan your meal times and allow yourself the time to enjoy it. Put down your eating utensil between bites.
- Chew. Chew. Chew. Try to chew each bite roughly 30 times before swallowing. It may seem difficult to chew that much, but it is important to ease the burden on the stomach to break down large bites of food.
- Limit liquids. Too much liquid during meals can dilute our stomach acid, making it more difficult to break down food. It's important to stay hydrated throughout the day, so drink your water in between meals.

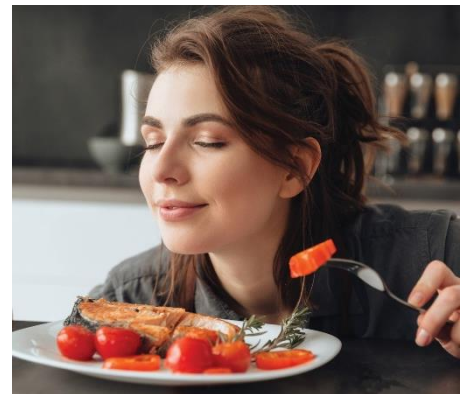


Photo: <https://fortmyers.floridaweekly.com/articles/what-your-nose-knows-sense-of-smell-and-your-health/>

Inspired by:

Briley NJ. *Food as Medicine Everyday: Reclaim Your Health with Whole Foods*. Portland, VA: Nunm Press; 2016.