

From Ingestion to Excretion, the digestive system is a group of organs pulling together to convert food into energy and nutrients to feed the entire body. The Digestive system measures 20 to 23 feet.

Food passes through a long tube inside the body known as the alimentary canal or the gastrointestinal tract (GI tract). The alimentary canal is made up of the oral cavity, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestines, and large intestines.

In addition to the alimentary canal, there are other important organs helping our bodies digest food, yet they do not have food pass through them. These organs include the teeth, tongue, salivary glands, liver, gallbladder, and pancreas.

To achieve the goal of providing energy and nutrients to the body, six major functions take place in the digestive system:

- Ingestion
- Secretion
- Mixing and movement
- Digestion
- Absorption
- Excretion

Nutrients are removed from food in the small intestine. The large intestine is responsible for pushing the waste out of the body. The greatest amount of water is found in the large intestine to aid in removing waste from the body. The large intestine absorbs water and contains bacteria that aid in the breaking down of wastes to extract some small amounts of nutrients.

Giving your body the hydration it needs to keep your body functioning is vital. Everything in your body needs hydration – blinking eyes, thinking brain, beating heart, speaking mouth, and especially, eliminating intestine.

When proper hydrating is not present, constipation can happen. While there are several things that can cause constipation (medications, stress, holding eliminations, improperly digested foods, etc.) one of the simplest causes is lack of hydration.

Hydration does not only apply to water. Water dense fruits and vegetables can also account for internal hydration. Healthy soups or broths can both feed your hunger and help keep you hydrated.

Teas and your favorite Barista drinks don't have to be eliminated if you consumed smartly. Consider getting a smaller version or look for ways to make them healthier. Then for every sugary sweet indulgence, add one cup of water or natural juice back into your diet.

If you do not like the taste of plain water, give naturally infused waters a try. Simply adding fruit slices or sprigs of parsley or mint to regular water can dramatically change its taste.

Empower yourself by researching ways to keep your digestive system running smoothly via food, drinks, gentle massage and bodywork. Your local library has a wealth of information on all these things, and it's free. Use all available information you can to become your own best health advocate.

To your health...