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Steps to Good Digestion

Our bodies rely on us to provide quality nutrients and energy through the food we eat and the liquids we drink. When our digestive process is sluggish, either through faulty digestion, absorption or poor food choices, our bodies become deficient and cannot perform as effectively as we need them to.

The digestive system is the “master” system of your body. When your “master” system is weakened or not working as efficiently as it should, there is the potential for all sorts of symptoms and diseases to begin to appear. Below are some important steps that can be followed to improve the efficiency of your digestive system.

1. Eat in a Calm, Relaxed State

Explanation

The body has two branches of the nervous system. The first branch governs all digestive system functions from the secretion of saliva all the way to the work of the liver and the kidneys. The other branch governs one’s stress response, also known as “fight or flight”. When one branch of the nervous system is working – for example, you are rushing to make dinner while the phone is ringing, your children are fighting and you have a meeting at 8 pm – the other branch of the nervous system that is responsible for digestion is shut off. In other words, you cannot adequately digest your food and feel stressed at the same time! Avoid eating while stressed or emotionally upset.

Suggestion

It is not enough to simply tell yourself to relax before you eat. You need to develop a relaxation practice, like meditation or prayer. This can be done easily by repeating some positive affirmations before eating or talking with your family about things you are grateful for that day. Taking the time to relax and be calm before eating with your family will allow you to enjoy the food you prepared and receive the maximum nutrients and energy from it.

2. Chew Your Food

Explanation

Chewing is an essential component of the digestive system process. Digestion starts in the mouth. Be sure to chew your food into a paste and not gulp it down in large pieces. If food is not properly chewed before it reaches the stomach, more energy is needed to digest it. Unchewed food can be seen as harmful invaders and can trigger a negative

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reaction in the body that can lead to indigestion and constipation. Partially digested food can ferment in the small and large intestines causing gas, bloating, IBS and allergies. Chewing your food will help you to consume less food while feeling more full!

Suggestion

Be conscious of chewing your food. Some foods will take longer to break down in your mouth. Take smaller bites and chew until the food forms a paste or you automatically swallow it. See how much longer a meal takes to eat when you chew properly. Tips for kids: turn chewing into a game where whoever takes the longest to chew their food without swallowing, wins!

3. Avoid Drinking Large Quantities of Liquid When Eating

Explanation

In order to break down and absorb the food you eat, limit caffeinated and carbonated drinks, especially with meals. The fluids consumed with meals dilute the digestive enzymes your body secretes. Additionally, carbonation makes you feel full faster, resulting in you eating less quality food.

Suggestion

Take small sips of water or herbal tea with meals.

4. Avoid Overeating

Explanation

Eating excessive amounts places a strain on the digestive system and food cannot be properly broken down and absorbed. Food in the stomach needs to be churned. When you overeat there is not any room left to churn, which can result in nausea, fatigue and bloating.

Suggestion

Chew your food properly. Eat balanced meals with appropriate portions, and be mindful when eating. Avoid watching TV, reading or engaging in a serious conversation. Keep in mind that it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to signal you that you are full. Always wait before eating seconds!