

All About the Digestive System



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What is Digestion

Eating (and drinking) are the taking in (swallowing) of food and other nourishing material by the body. That is, eating is the processes by which an organism takes in food.

Digestion is the process by which the material we eat, such as food and drink, is broken down into nutrients that can be absorbed and used by the body and waste products are expelled from the body.

None of the food we eat, and the liquids we drink, can be used by the body in the forms in which we consume them. Foods and liquids need to be broken down into very small particles and molecules so that they can be absorbed and used by the body.

Digestion is both a mechanical and chemical process. For example, the teeth in the mouth help to physically crush and break-

up the food into smaller pieces to increase their surface area so that it can be processed chemically in later stages of digestion. The Stomach secretes acids and enzymes which chemically break down the food into very small particles and molecules, so that these can be processed in later stages of digestion.

Food is made up of various different types and concentrations of nutrients that determine how nutritious our food is. These nutrients include carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water.

Food may also contain material that cannot be digested by the body, such as **fiber**. Diets rich in fiber have a number of very significant health benefits, including decreased risks of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and bowel and Colon issues.

The collection and elimination of waste products from the body is an important part of digestion. Undigested and undigestible parts of food, dead cells from the lining of digestive tract, and some water, are eliminated from the body as **faeces** (also called **stools**).

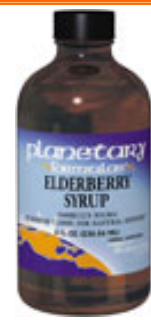
Maintaining a healthy Digestive System is extremely important for your general health and well-being.

What is the Digestive System

The **Digestive System** consists of the **Alimentary Canal** and various other organs whose primary function is to support the Digestive System

The **Alimentary Canal**, is a long tube about 10 meters long which starts at the mouth and ends at the anus. This tube consists of multiple sections which each have their own specific functions to perform in the process of digestion. The sections of the **Alimentary Canal** in the order in which they process food are:

- Mouth: the **teeth** in the mouth help to physically crush and break-up the food into smaller pieces to increase their surface area so that it can be processed in later stages of digestion. Also, **saliva** helps to soften food to make it easier to process, and also begins chemically breaking down the food so that it can be processed in later stages of digestion. The **tongue** helps to mix the crushed food with saliva.
- Throat: the act of swallowing pushes the food from the mouth to the Esophagus.
- Esophagus (also called Oesophagus): The Esophagus is a 10-inch long tube that connects the throat and Stomach. Muscles in the wall of the Esophagus contract in synchronized waves, called **peristalsis**, where the muscles behind the food contract, squeezing it forward, while muscles ahead of it relax, forcing it to advance towards the Stomach, a process.
- Stomach: Powerful Stomach muscles churn and mix the food, while glands in the walls of the Stomach secrete acids and enzymes which chemically break down the food into very small particles and molecules, so that these can be processed in later stages of digestion.
- Small Intestine: In the upper section of the Small Intestine, called the **Duodenum**, bile and pancreatic digestive juices mix with other juices secreted by the wall of the Small Intestine to continue the break down of food. The food then enters the **Ileum**, the longest section of the Small Intestine, where nutrients are absorbed through the



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Getting sick (or at least pretending to) was sort of fun back in the old da

wall of the Small Intestine and transferred around the body via the blood stream (**Circulatory System**), to nourish and provide energy to all of the cells and organs of the body, allowing them to grow, repair, and perform the functions necessary to maintain life and fight disease, as well as allowing us to be able to move, think, breath, see, hear, and so on.

- **Large Intestine** (also called the **Colon** and **Bowel**): In the Large Intestine, nearly all of the water is absorbed, leaving a usually soft but formed substance called stool. Muscles in the wall of your Colon separate the waste into small segments that are pushed into your lower Colon and rectum.
- **Rectum**: The Rectum provides a temporary storage place for the waste products of digestion. When the rectal walls are stretched, they signal the need for a bowel movement.
- **Anus**: The powerful sphincter muscles in the Anus prevent the release of waste products from the Rectum until the person is ready to expel them from the body.

Various other organs in the body perform functions that are important to digestion or support digestion, and these include:

- **Gallbladder**: stores and concentrates bile, and then adds it to food as it enters the **Duodenum**, the upper portion of the Small Intestine.
- **Liver**: performs 100's of useful functions, including nutrient storage, filtering and processing of chemicals contained in food, detoxifying harmful substances, purifying your blood, manufacturing vital nutrients, and bile production, a solution that helps digest fats and eliminate waste products from the body. **Bile**, a fluid secreted by the Liver, is essential for the proper digestion of fats and helping the body rid itself of worn-out red blood cells, cholesterol, and potentially toxic chemicals and metals. The Liver is responsible detoxifying harmful substances that a person may eat, drink, inhale, rub on their skin, or which otherwise enter the body.
- **Pancreas**: plays important roles in both digestion and metabolism, and is a large, long, flat gland which is located behind the lower part of the Stomach and in between the Duodenum (the upper part of the Small Intestine) and the Spleen. Among other functions, the Pancreas produces digestive enzymes that help break down proteins, carbohydrates, and fats.

As a result of the Digestive System, the body is able to:

- Extract nutrients from food and drink, and use these for growth, repair, and the maintenance of life.
- Process and discard waste products from the body as **feces** (also called **stools**).

Each organ of the Digestive System and each section of the Alimentary Canal has specific and important roles to play in the digestion of the material we ingest.

The healthy transit time of food through a healthy human adult body (from mouth to anus) is less than 24 hours.

However, recent research has shown that this time has been greatly extended beyond what is considered safe or healthy, particularly in the Western World, where the average for men is approximately 60 hours, and 70 hours for women. This is



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because of diet and lifestyle factors.

As a result, food is remaining in the body longer (almost 3 times as long as it should be), and taking longer to process, and this can elevate the risk of a range of health complications, such as constipation, digestive problems, bowel problems, and even bowel cancer.

What are Digestive System Disorders

Digestive System Disorders are any medical conditions or health complaints that directly afflict the **Digestive System**. As noted in section 3, the Digestive System consists of the **Alimentary Canal** and various other organs of the body whose function is to support the Digestive System. In section 3, we noted that the:

- **Alimentary Canal** consists of the **Mouth, Throat, Esophagus, Stomach, Small Intestine, Large Intestine** (also called the **Colon** and **Bowel**), **Rectum**, and **Anus**.
- The organs whose function is to support the Digestive System, such as the **Gallbladder, Liver, Pancreas**.

More specifically then, we can define **Digestive System Disorders** as any medical condition or health complaint that afflicts the **Mouth, Throat, Esophagus, Stomach, Small Intestine, Large Intestine** (also called the **Colon** and **Bowel**), **Rectum, Anus, Gallbladder, Liver**, and/or **Pancreas**.

Because so many parts of the body are included in this list, there are a very large **Digestive System Disorders** that we can include in this list.

Each organ of the Digestive System and each section of the Alimentary Canal has specific and important roles to play in the digestion of the material we ingest. The loss of function of any of the sections of the Alimentary Canal or any of the support organs can cause serious health issues and complications, and even death.

Digestive System Disorders may be classified into eight main categories:

- Hemorrhoids And Bowel Disorders
- Celiac Disease And Other Intestinal Disorders
- Colon Cancer And Other Digestive Cancers
- Esophagus Disorders
- Gallbladder And Pancreas Disorders
- Hernia
- Liver Disease
- Stomach Disorders

Each of these categories are discussed in the sections below.

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Hemorrhoids And Bowel Disorders mainly refers to disorders in the lower sections of the digestive system, namely the **Large Intestine** (also called the **Colon** and **Bowel**), **Rectum**, and **Anus**. These organs are essential to digestion, and any loss of function of these organs can have very serious health consequences.

Hemorrhoids And Bowel Disorders include the following conditions:

- **Anal Fissures:** are small tears in the lining or opening of the anal canal that can cause a great deal of pain and discomfort, and some bleeding. They tend to occur fairly commonly in infants aged 6 to 24 months and they may occur in older children and adults as a result of passing hard or large stools during bowel movements. Most anal fissures heal without requiring any treatment, others require creams or suppositories to provide relief as they heal.
- **Anal Itching (also called Pruritus Ani):** is an intense itching of the anus and/or the skin around the anus, which produces a strong urge to scratch that can cause discomfort and embarrassment. The condition can be caused by many factors and moisture, clothing abrasion, and the pressure of sitting can aggravate the itching. The itching is often worst at night and right after bowel movements. Anal Itching is a common problem that is easily cured with proper treatment.
- **Appendicitis:** occurs when the appendix becomes inflamed and filled with pus, causing a great deal of pain around the navel or lower right abdomen. The Appendix is a finger-shaped organ on the lower right side of the abdomen that projects outwards from the Colon. The Appendix performs no known essential functions, but it can still cause problems. If left untreated, Appendicitis is potentially fatal. Surgery is standard treatment.
- **Collagenous Colitis / Lymphocytic Colitis (also known as Microscopic Colitis):** are rare inflammations of the Colon that cause chronic watery diarrhea that are more common in the elderly. Treatment involves a combination of dietary and lifestyle changes and medications. In rare cases, surgery may be required.
- **Colon Polyps:** are small clumps of cells that forms on the Colon lining, and are believed to occur in about one in three adults. In the vast majority of cases, the polyps are harmless, but in some cases then can become cancerous. Colon polyps may cause no symptoms, or they may cause rectal bleeding, bowel movement changes, and abdominal pain. The risks of developing polyps are higher for older people, the overweight, smokers, those who eat a high-fat / low-fiber diet, and those who have a family history of Colon polyps or Colon cancer.
- **Constipation:** is a condition that involves bowel movements that are less frequent than normal, passing hard stools, and straining during bowel movements. If you pass dry, hard stools less than three times a week, then you are probably constipated. Other symptoms may be feelings of being bloated, sluggish, discomfort, and/or pain. In almost all cases, all that is required to treat constipation are simple lifestyle changes, such as getting more exercise, eating high-fiber foods, and drinking plenty of water.
- **Crohn's Disease:** is an **Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)** which occurs when the digestive tract lining becomes inflamed, causing severe diarrhea, potentially debilitating abdominal pain, and may cause life-threatening complications. There is no known cure for Crohn's Disease, but there are therapies that can



- significantly reduce the symptoms.
- **Diarrhea:** is a common digestive disorder that occurs when stools become very loose and watery, causing abdominal pain, frequent trips to the toilet, and larger volumes of stool. Various factors can cause Diarrhea, including poor absorption of nutrients (**malabsorption**), infections from viruses, bacteria, and parasites, medications, such as antibiotics, and artificial sweeteners. Diarrhea can also occur as an effect of some other medical condition, such as **Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)** or some other **Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)**. Chronic Diarrhea occurs when the condition is severe and lasts longer than four weeks. Diarrhea can cause the loss of significant or even dangerous and life threatening amounts of water and salts. A range of medications can successfully treat the condition.
 - **Diverticulitis:** develops from another condition called **Diverticulosis**, a condition that is common in people aged over 40, and causes small, bulging pouches (called **diverticula**) somewhere along the digestive tract. In most cases, these pouches cause no problems, but in some cases one or more of the pouches can become inflamed or infected, causing severe abdominal pain, fever, nausea, and a marked change in bowel habits. When diverticula become infected, the condition is called **Diverticulitis**. In most cases of Diverticulitis can be treated with rest, changes in your diet (eating more fiber), and antibiotics. However, in serious cases, surgery may be required.
 - **Encopresis (also called Stool Holding):** occurs when a child resists having bowel movements or is chronically constipated, causing compressed stool to collect in the Colon and rectum. When the Colon is full of impacted stool, liquid stool can leak around the stool and out of the anus, causing underwear staining. Treatment involves clearing the Colon of impacted stool and following self-care measures (healthy diet, plenty of water, etc) to ensure regular bowel movements.
 - **Fecal Incontinence (also called Bowel Incontinence):** is a fairly common condition that occurs when a person loses their ability to control their bowel movements, causing feces and gas to leak from their rectum at unwanted times. Severity of the condition can range from occasional leakage to complete loss of bowel control. The condition can be caused by constipation, diarrhea, muscle or nerve damage (e.g. following childbirth), or an anal sphincter weakened with age. The embarrassment caused by this condition can cause a person to stay at home and withdraw from social events because they are afraid of an accident. Many treatments are available to improve or cure the condition.
 - **Hemorrhoids (also called Piles):** are a fairly common condition that occurs when veins in the anus and rectum become swollen and inflamed, resulting in itching, bleeding, and pain. The condition is caused by various factors, such as straining during bowel movements or increased pressure on the veins during pregnancy. In most cases, treatment simply involves self-care and lifestyle changes. If these are not sufficient, then medications and other treatments are effective.
 - **Hirschsprung's Disease:** is a rare condition that affects the large intestine, causing problems with passing stool (constipation) and absorbing nutrients. The condition is congenital. That is, it is present when a baby is born with missing nerve cells in the muscles of a portion of their Colon. Treatment involves surgical removal of the diseased portion of the Colon.
 - **Intestinal Ischemia:** is a rare condition which occurs when there is a diminished blood flow to the small intestine, causing pain and other symptoms. The condition may occur suddenly (**Acute Intestinal Ischemia**) when a blood clot prevents blood flow to the intestines, or it may develop slowly over time



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- (Chronic Intestinal Ischemia)**. In severe cases, the condition can cause sections of dead or damaged intestinal tissue, which can be fatal and requires immediate medical care. Treatment options include medications, surgery, or medical procedures to open the arteries.
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS): is a fairly common disorder that causes abdominal cramping, bloating, gas, diarrhea, and/or constipation. In many cases, IBS can be controlled with diet and lifestyle changes, and by reducing the stress in your life. IBS does not cause intestinal bleeding, permanent damage to the bowel, or cancer, and it does not require surgery, and it won't shorten your life.
 - Ischemic Colitis (also called Colonic Ischemia): occurs when part of your large intestine becomes inflamed and injured, causing pain on the left side of the abdomen, reduced blood flow, and impaired intestinal function. In severe cases, the condition can cause ulcers along the lining of the Colon and even become life-threatening. The condition occurs mostly in people over 50 years of age.
 - Pinworm Infection: is the most common type of roundworm infection, where the parasites use the body as a host to allow them to live, lay eggs, grow, and reproduce. In most cases, the parasites cause mild digestive problems or even no symptoms at all. However, if hundreds of worms or more are involved, then serious symptoms and complications can occur. Treatment involves practicing good hygiene and medication.
 - Proctitis: is an inflammation of the lining of the rectum, which can be as a result of a sexually transmitted disease, or inflammatory bowel infections and diseases, such as **Ulcerative Colitis**. Proctitis can may be a side effect of some medical treatments, including antibiotic usage and radiation therapy. When sexually transmitted, Proctitis is most common in promiscuous men who engage in anal or oral-anal intercourse. The condition may be short-lived, or it may last for months or longer. Treatment options depend on the cause for the condition.
 - Pseudomembranous Colitis (also called Antibiotic-Associated Colitis and C. difficile Colitis): is an inflammatory condition of the large intestine that sometimes occurs after antibiotic usage, which causes imbalance between "good" and "bad" bacteria in the intestine, allowing the proliferation and spread of harmful bacteria. In severe cases, the condition can cause serious health complications and even be life-threatening.
 - Solitary Rectal Ulcer Syndrome: is a very rare condition where a single ulcer occurs in the rectum, causing rectal bleeding and straining when attempting to pass stool. In mild cases, treatment usually involves simple dietary and fluid intake changes. In more severe cases, medications and even surgery may be required.
 - Ulcerative Colitis: is an **Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)** that causes chronic inflammation of the digestive tract, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and potentially debilitating and life-threatening health complications. The condition has no known cure, however a range of therapies are available that can significantly reduce the symptoms and even bring about long-term remission.

Celiac Disease And Other Intestinal Disorders

Celiac Disease And Other Intestinal Disorders includes any medical conditions or health complaints that afflict or originate in the small or large intestines, the sections of the digestive system primarily concerned with



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absorption of nutrients and water. These organs are essential to digestion, and any loss of function of these organs can have very serious health consequences.

Celiac Disease And Other Intestinal Disorders include the following conditions:

- **Bile Reflux**: occurs bile flows upward from the small intestine into the Stomach and Esophagus. Bile is digestive fluid that is produced by the Liver. Bile Reflux often accompanies **Acid Reflux**, where Stomach acid flows back up into the Esophagus, and alone or together they cause burning sensations and pain in the upper chest and throat. Either of these conditions can potentially increase the risk of esophageal cancer. Unlike Acid Reflux, Bile Reflux cannot normally be usually controlled with diet or lifestyle changes. In most cases, Bile Reflux can be treated is medications, but it may require surgery in severe cases.
- **Blind Loop Syndrome (also called Stasis Syndrome or Stagnant Loop Syndrome)**: occurs when part of the small intestine is bypassed and cut-off from the flow of digestive juices and food, causing increased bacterial growth in the cut-off section of the small intestine. These bacteria can then interfere with the absorption of essential nutrients, and this can lead to diarrhea, weight loss, and malnutrition. The condition is often a complication of abdominal surgery, but it can also result from defects in the Colon and also by some diseases. Antibiotics are usually sufficient to treat the condition, but in some cases surgery is required.
- **Celiac Disease**: is a digestive disorder which is triggered by the consumption of **gluten**, a protein commonly contained in bread, cookies, crackers, pasta, pizza crust, and many other foods containing wheat, barley, oats, or rye. After someone with Celiac Disease consumes gluten, the protein causes an immune reaction in the small intestine, which causes damage to the surface of the small intestine and reduces its ability to absorb certain nutrients. Eventually, the reduced absorption of nutrients can cause vitamin deficiencies in the brain, peripheral nervous system, bones, Liver, and other organs of the body, and this can leave the body open to a range of illnesses and also cause a range of potentially serious health complications. Currently, there is no cure for Celiac Disease. The main treatment option for managing the condition is dietary changes.
- **Cyclospora Infection**: is an uncommon intestinal infection caused by a microscopic, single-celled parasite, which occurs as a result of consuming contaminated water and produce. The infection can cause a range of symptoms, such as frequent and often very explosive and watery diarrhea, which may alternate with periods of constipation. The main treatment option is antibiotics combined with improved food-hygiene practices.
- **Intestinal Obstruction**: is a blockage that prevents food and fluid from passing through the small intestine or Colon. The blockage occurs because of adhesions, which are fibrous bands of tissue in the intestine, or as the result of hernias or tumors. The condition can cause a range of symptoms, such as abdominal pain, swelling of the abdomen, nausea, and vomiting. If left untreated, the condition can cause the blocked parts of the intestine to die, causing severe infection kin the body which can be potentially fatal. The condition requires prompt medical care.
- **Lactose Intolerance (also called Lactase Deficiency)**: is the inability to fully digest the sugar (lactose) contained in milk and dairy products. The condition is not usually life threatening, but it can cause a range of unpleasant symptoms, such as diarrhea, nausea, abdominal cramps, bloating, and has.

Lactose Intolerance is caused by the lack of **lactase**, an enzyme produced by the lining of your small intestine that breaks down lactose so that it can be absorbed into your bloodstream. As such, Lactose Intolerance is not a food allergy, and it does not involve the immune system. The best treatment for the condition is limiting the amount of milk and dairy products in the diet. To avoid developing a calcium deficiency, due to decreased milk and dairy consumption, vitamin supplements should also be taken.

- **Shigella Infection (also called Shigellosis)**: is an intestinal infection caused by a family of bacteria known as **shigella**. The condition can cause a range of symptoms, such as abdominal pain, fever, and diarrhea, which is often bloody. Not all people with shigella in their gut will develop symptoms. The bacteria are often transmitted by direct contact with the bacteria via stool, such as when a person does not wash their hands properly after changing diapers, or as the result of consuming contaminated food or drinking, or by swimming in contaminated water. The condition is most common in developing nations where there is poor sanitation and a lack of clean water. The condition is treated with antibiotics, in conjunction with improved food and hygiene standards, and obtaining access to clean water.
- **Whipple's Disease (also called Intestinal Lipodystrophy)**: is a rare bacterial infection that reduces the gastrointestinal system's ability to breakdown foods, such as fats and carbohydrates, and reduces the small intestine's ability to absorb nutrients. The bacteria can also infect other organs of the body, such as the brain, eyes, heart, and joints. As a result of such wide spread infection, Whipple's Disease can cause a very wide range of symptoms, such as diarrhea, abdominal cramping, weight loss, inflamed ankle, knee, and wrist joints, fatigue, weakness, memory loss, confusion, fever, cough, loss of balance, seizures, and other symptoms. A lengthy course of antibiotics is required to treat the condition. Without proper treatment, the condition can be fatal.

Colon Cancer And Other Digestive Cancers

Survival rates for sufferers of cancer have improved over the years because of two main factors:

- Improved treatment methods.
- Improved screening and monitoring, which help detect and begin treatment of the cancer earlier.

The prognosis for the sufferer is best when cancer is detected early and proper treatment begun as soon as possible. If cancer is detected early enough, then treatments have much better chances of success, driving the cancer into remission.

Diet and lifestyle changes can significantly reduce the risk of developing many forms of cancer, including some of the cancers discussed below. Even in cases where cancer is caught too late to be cured, a range of treatment options can still be effective in relieving the pain and symptoms that are caused by the cancer while also improving the quality of life for the sufferer.

Metastatic Cancers occur when cells from tumors in other parts of the body spread to other areas and organs. For example, Liver Cancer is often caused by when Colon, lung, and breast cancer cells spread to the Liver. In this cases,

the cancer is named and treated according to the organ or area in which it began. For example, if the cancer started in the lung and spread to the Liver, then the cancer is called **Metastatic Lung Cancer**, and the cancer, even that part of the cancer in the Liver, will be treated as a lung cancer.

Colon Cancer And Other Digestive Cancers include cancers of various sections and organs of the Digestive System. These sections and organs of the Digestive System are essential to digestion, and any loss of function of these organs can cause very serious health consequences, which in addition to the problems that cancers can cause, make these disorders very serious indeed.

Colon Cancer And Other Digestive Cancers include the following:

- **Colon Cancer:** is cancer of the large intestine (also called the **Colon**). **Rectal Cancer** is cancer of the Colon's lowest 6 inches. Both of these cancers are called **Colorectal Cancer**. Most Colon cancer begin as small, benign (noncancerous) clumps of cells called **adenomatous polyps**, which produce no symptoms. However, these polyps may develop into cancer over time, and such cancer will cause changes in bowel habits, bloody stool, gas, and/or abdominal pain.
- **Esophageal Cancer:** is cancer that starts the Esophagus, that causes a range of symptoms, such as difficulty swallowing (**dysphagia**), sensations of food becoming stuck in the throat or chest, throat pain, weight loss, hiccups, hoarseness, and/or vomiting blood.
- **Gallbladder Cancer:** is a rare form of cancer that rarely produces symptoms in the early stages. Because of this, early Gallbladder Cancer is often discovered only when the gallbladder is removed as a treatment for gallstones. However, in later stages, this cancer can cause abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), unintended weight loss, and/or loss of appetite. Surgical removal of the gallbladder or the cancerous part of bile duct has been the main treatment for this cancer.
- **Liver Cancer:** is cancer in the cells of the Liver. Most Liver Cancers are believed to be **metastatic cancers**, which occur when cells from tumors in other parts of the body spread to the Liver and other organs. Cancers of the Colon, lung, and breast commonly spread to the Liver. **Primary Liver Cancer**, that is cancer that starts in the Liver, is not common, and when it occurs it is rarely discovered early and usually doesn't respond well to current treatments. As a result, the prognosis for people with Primary Liver Cancer is often poor. The risks of developing Primary Liver Cancer can be greatly reduced by avoiding hepatitis infection and by avoiding scarring of the Liver (**cirrhosis**). Liver Cancer can cause abdominal pain, abdominal swelling, nausea, vomiting, weakness, fatigue, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), unintended weight loss, and/or loss of appetite.
- **Oral And Throat Cancer:** includes cancer of the lips, mouth, tongue, gums, throat, and salivary glands. Periodic self-examination of the mouth is the best way to detect the early signs of oral and throat cancer. For example, is there a new lump in your mouth that doesn't seem to be healing? Many oral and throat cancers are advanced by the time medical advice is sought, because in early stages they produce no pain or they cause minor symptoms that are similar to other health problems,

such as a toothache. The main symptoms of Oral And Throat Cancers include one or more of the following:

- Bad breath,
- Cheek thickening,
- Difficulty chewing,
- Difficulty moving the jaw,
- Difficulty moving the tongue,
- Difficulty swallowing,
- Discoloration inside the mouth. e.g. white, red or dark patches.
- Feeling like something is caught in the throat,
- Loose teeth,
- Lump in the neck,
- Lumps in the mouth,
- Mouth pain,
- Mouth sores that increase in size or don't heal,
- Numb tongue,
- Numbness in the mouth,
- Pain in the jaw,
- Pain in the teeth or gums,
- Soreness in the throat,
- Swelling in the jaw,
- Voice changes ,
- **Pancreatic Cancer:** is a dangerous cancer that occurs when cancerous cells form in the tissues of the Pancreas. Pancreatic Cancer is one of the most dangerous cancers because it spreads rapidly and produces few if any symptoms in the early stages, which usually means that it isn't detected until it is quite advanced. By the time symptoms develop and the cancer is detected, it is likely to have spread to other parts of the body, eliminating surgical removal as a possible treatment. Pancreatic Cancer can cause abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, itching, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), unintended weight loss, and/or loss of appetite.
- **Stomach Cancer:** is another dangerous cancer, because it produces few if any symptoms in the early stages, which usually means that it isn't detected until it is quite advanced. By the time symptoms develop and the cancer is detected, it is likely to have spread to other parts of the body, eliminating surgical removal as a possible treatment. Stomach Cancer is most common in areas where infection with Helicobacter pylori bacteria is common and where the diet is high in salted, smoked, and pickled foods. This commonly occurs in areas that lack refrigeration as a means of preserving food, so they resort to age old methods of salting, smoking, and pickling their food. The symptoms of Stomach Cancer include discomfort in the middle or upper abdomen, abdominal discomfort that is aggravated by eating, black, tarry stools, vomiting blood, vomiting after meals, weakness, fatigue, weight loss, and loss of appetite.

Esophagus Disorders

Esophagus Disorders includes any medical conditions or health complaints that afflict or originate in the Throat or Esophagus, the sections of the digestive system primarily concerned with delivering food and drink to the Stomach. These organs are essential to digestion, and any loss of function of these organs can cause very serious health consequences.

Esophagus Disorders include the following conditions:

- **Barrett's Esophagus:** is a uncommon condition where the cells lining the lower Esophagus change color and composition because of repeated exposure to Stomach acid. This exposure to Stomach acid is usually because of long-term **Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)**, a chronic condition where Stomach acid is regurgitated up into the lower Esophagus. People with Barrett's Esophagus have a higher risk of developing Esophageal Cancer. Dietary and life style changes are the best way to eliminate or reduce the frequency of Stomach acids flowing up into the lower Esophagus. The symptoms of Barrett's Esophagus include difficulty swallowing, black, tarry stools, vomiting blood, weight loss, and loss of appetite.
- **Difficulty Swallowing (also called Dysphagia):** may temporarily occur when someone eats too much too quickly or when they don't chew their food well enough. However, if the difficulty swallowing is persistent, then it may indicate a serious medical condition. The symptoms include pain while swallowing (**odynophagia**), inability to swallow, choking or coughing while eating, feelings of food being caught in your chest, bringing food back up into the mouth (**regurgitation**), heartburn, recurrent pneumonia, and unexpected weight loss.
- **Esophageal Spasms:** occur when muscle spasms disrupt the coordinated muscular contractions, called **peristalsis**, that move food down the Esophagus to the Stomach. The condition is more common in people with **Acid Reflux Disease**. The main symptoms of Esophageal Spasms are swallowing problems and chest pain when swallowing. Various medications can help relax the esophageal muscles, and altering eating habits can help prevent the condition.
- **Esophageal Varices:** are abnormally enlarged veins in the lower part of the Esophagus. This condition generally occurs when normal blood flow to the Liver is blocked, which can occur as a result of scarring of the Liver (**cirrhosis**) and other conditions. When the blood flow to the Liver is blocked, blood backs up into smaller, more fragile blood vessels in the Esophagus, and also sometimes into the blood vessels of the Stomach or rectum, causing the vessels to swell. The symptoms of Esophageal Varices include vomiting blood, black, tarry stools, decreased urination (because of unusually low blood pressure), excessive thirst, lightheadedness, and (in severe cases) shock. Esophageal Varices do not produce symptoms unless they rupture and bleed, which is a life-threatening occurrence that requires immediate medical care. Medications that lower blood pressure can help treat Esophageal Varices. In cases where such medications aren't effective, the Esophageal Varices may be injected with a clotting solution or tied with special elastic bands to prevent bleeding.

- **Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD):** a chronic condition where Stomach acid, and occasionally bile, is regurgitated up into the lower Esophagus. The constant acid reflux can irritate and inflame the lining of the Esophagus, and cause a range of complications, such as narrowing the Esophagus, ulcers in the Esophagus, and a slightly increased risk of developing Esophageal Cancer. The main symptoms of GERD include burning sensations in the chest and throat (**heartburn**) especially when lying down, a sour taste in the mouth, difficulty swallowing (**dysphagia**), coughing, wheezing, hoarseness, sore throat, regurgitation of food or sour liquid.
- **Heartburn:** is a condition where the main symptom is a burning sensation in the chest. Occasional Heartburn is normal. However, frequent Heartburn can be a serious problem that may be linked to another serious condition, such as GERD, and it may require medical attention. In most cases, mild Heartburn can be managed with over-the-counter medications and dietary and lifestyle changes. In severe cases, such treatments will probably only provide temporary or partial relief.

Gallbladder And Pancreas Disorders

Gallbladder And Pancreas Disorders includes any medical conditions or health complaints that afflict or originate in the Gallbladder or Pancreas. Together, these organs perform many hundreds of essential functions, including the storage and delivery of **Bile** (a fluid secreted by the Liver), and producing digestive enzymes that help break down proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. These organs are essential to digestion, and any loss of function of these organs can cause very serious health consequences.

Gallbladder And Pancreas Disorders include the following conditions:

- **Gallstones:** are solid deposits of cholesterol or calcium salts that form in the Gallbladder or the bile ducts that connect to the Gallbladder. Most people with Gallstones do not know that they have them, and they require no treatment. However, in other people, the Gallstones can cause severe and intermittent abdominal pain, fever, vomiting, indigestion, and nausea. Gallstones can be as small, like a grain of sand, or large, like a golf ball, and you may have anywhere from 1 to 100's of them. Gallstones can cause serious and potentially fatal health complications, if left untreated.
- **Pancreatic Cysts:** are cysts in the Pancreas that may be benign or malignant. They may be **pseudo-cysts** because the pockets of digestive fluids aren't contained by walls of cyst cells. Instead, the walls are made from Pancreas cells. Pancreatic Cysts can cause abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting.
- **Pancreatitis:** is an inflammatory condition which occurs when digestive enzymes in the Pancreas become active and attack the Pancreas itself. Pancreatitis may be acute (appear suddenly and lasting for several days), or it may chronic (develop gradually and remain for years). Pancreatitis can cause mild to severe abdominal pain, nausea, fever, and vomiting, and can cause serious health complications. The main causes are believed to be alcohol abuse and untreated Gallstones, but there may be other causes.

- **Zollinger-Ellison Syndrome:** is a very rare and complex condition in which one or more tumors form in the Pancreas or Duodenum (the upper part of the Small Intestine). The tumors are called **gastrinomas** because they secrete large amounts of the hormone **gastrin**, which in turn causes excessive Stomach acid production. This excess acid can cause peptic ulcers. The main symptoms include burning, aching, gnawing discomfort in the upper abdomen, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, bleeding, and weight loss.

Hernia

A **Hernia** occurs when one part of the body protrudes through a gap, tear, or opening into another part. There are two main types of hernia that can cause Digestive System Disorders:

- Hiatal Hernia
- Inguinal Hernia

A **Hiatal Hernia** forms at the opening in the diaphragm where the Esophagus joins the Stomach. Most small Hiatal Hernias don't cause and pain or other problems, and many people may not even be aware that they have one. However, a large Hiatal Hernia can allow food and acid to go back up into the Esophagus, causing heartburn, chest pain, and nausea. Medications and Self Care Techniques (see section) can relieve the symptoms, however surgery may be required to repair the hernia.

Inguinal Hernias occur when soft tissue, often part of the intestine, protrudes through a weak point or tear in the lower abdominal wall. The resulting bulge which is common for this condition can be painful, especially when the sufferer coughs, bends over, or lifts something heavy. Inguinal Hernias may occur as a result of muscle weakness, strenuous physical activity, or excessive coughing that accompanies smoking. Inguinal Hernias can cause potentially life-threatening complications, and **key-hole** surgical techniques can repair the hernia, while also producing less scarring, less pain, and allowing faster recovery..

Liver Disease

Liver Disease includes any medical conditions or health complaints that afflict or originate in the Liver. The **Liver** performs 100's of useful functions, including nutrient storage, filtering and processing of chemicals contained in food, detoxifying harmful substances, purifying your blood, manufacturing vital nutrients, and bile production, a solution that helps digest fats and eliminate waste products from the body. **Bile**, a fluid secreted by the Liver, is essential for the proper digestion of fats and helping the body rid itself of worn-out red blood cells, cholesterol, and potentially toxic chemicals and metals. The Liver is essential to digestion, and any loss of function of can cause very serious health consequences.

When there is a loss of function in the Liver, the symptoms generally include abdominal pain, nausea, fever,

confusion, fatigue, vomiting, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), abdominal swelling due to fluid accumulation (**ascites**), unintended weight loss, and/or loss of appetite. These symptoms are common to most of the conditions described below.

A number of factors can cause serious Liver disease, which is called **hepatitis**, such as alcohol, certain drugs, and viral infections. These are explored, along with other conditions, below.

Liver Disease includes the following conditions:

- **Alcoholic Hepatitis:** is inflammation of the Liver, which is often caused by excessive and/or prolonged alcohol consumption. The damage caused to the Liver as a result of Alcoholic Hepatitis can be reversed by abstaining from consuming alcohol and other substances that may harm the Liver. For people who continue to consume alcohol, the condition is likely to progress to scarring of the Liver (**cirrhosis**) and **Liver failure**, either of which can be fatal unless a Liver transplant can occur in time. The main symptoms of Alcoholic Hepatitis include abdominal pain, nausea, fever, confusion, fatigue, vomiting, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), abdominal swelling due to fluid accumulation (**ascites**), unintended weight loss, and/or loss of appetite.
- **Autoimmune Hepatitis:** occurs when the body's own immune system attacks the Liver. Exactly why this happens isn't clear, but it is believed to occur when some diseases, toxins, and drugs trigger the immune response in susceptible people, especially women. If left untreated, Autoimmune Hepatitis can cause scarring of the Liver (**cirrhosis**) and eventually to Liver failure. However, when diagnosed and treated early, Autoimmune Hepatitis can usually be controlled with long-term use of immune system suppression drugs. If these drugs aren't effective, then a Liver transplant may be required. The main symptoms of Autoimmune Hepatitis include abdominal pain, nausea, confusion, itching, vomiting, joint ache, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), abdominal swelling due to fluid accumulation (**ascites**), and other symptoms.
- **Cirrhosis:** is a condition that causes irreversible scarring of the Liver. When this occurs, scar tissue replaces normal tissue, blood flow through the Liver is reduced, and it is increasingly difficult for the Liver to carry out the essential functions it performs. The condition is most commonly caused by excessive alcohol use and chronic infection with the hepatitis C virus, but it may also be caused by immune system issues, damaged bile ducts, and/or prolonged exposure to various environmental toxins. In its early stages, Cirrhosis rarely causes signs or symptoms. However, as Liver function deteriorates, the symptoms include fatigue, nausea, unintended weight loss, swelling in the legs and abdomen, and in later stages, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), itching, and bleeding from your digestive system that can be severe. Liver damage caused by cirrhosis is permanent and irreversible, however, the disease usually progresses slowly and the symptoms it causes are usually controllable. Specific treatment depend on the underlying cause. However, people with

cirrhosis must avoid alcohol and any other substances that can harm the Liver. If Liver function becomes seriously impaired, a Liver transplant may be the only option. If sufficient treatment is not conducted in time, Cirrhosis can be fatal.

- **Enlarged Liver (also called Hepatomegaly)**: isn't a disease, but it is the sign of an underlying medical condition, such as hepatitis, congestive heart failure, or cancer. Treatment options depends on the underlying cause. There normally aren't any specific symptoms associated with an Enlarged Liver, but there may be for the underlying cause. In addition, abdominal tenderness and **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes) may occur if the Liver becomes so large that function is affected.
- **Gilbert's Syndrome (also known as Constitutional Hepatic Dysfunction, Unconjugated Benign Bilirubinemia, and Familial Nonhemolytic Jaundice)**: is a common but mild disorder in which the Liver cannot properly process a substance, called **bilirubin**, which is produced by the breakdown of red blood cells. Gilbert's Syndrome doesn't usually require treatment, it usually doesn't pose any serious health issues, and the only symptom it may cause is a mild **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes). For these reasons, Gilbert's Syndrome is usually not considered a disease at all.
- **Hereditary Hemochromatosis (HH)**: is a genetic defect that causes your body to absorb too much iron from the food you eat, leading to excessively high levels of iron in various organs, especially the Liver, heart, and pancreas. The symptoms of HH include abdominal pain, joint pain, fatigue, and impotence. Over time, such high levels of iron can cause damage organs and lead to a range of life-threatening conditions including cancer, heart problems, and Liver disease, each causing their own symptoms. The condition can be treated by removing blood from your body to lower the level of iron.
- **Hepatitis A**: is a highly contagious Liver infection which is caused by the **hepatitis A virus (HAV)**, which can be contracted by consuming contaminated food or water, or from close contact with someone who is infected. Hepatitis A is usually not as serious as other types of viral hepatitis, but it can cause Liver inflammation that affects your Liver function. Some infected people never develop symptoms of the disease, but in other cases, the symptoms can be similar to those of flu. Mild cases of Hepatitis A require no treatment and pose no long-term risk to the Liver, however, a vaccine is available for those at risk. Practicing good hygiene, such as washing your hands properly, is the best way to protect against Hepatitis A.
- **Hepatitis B**: is a serious Liver infection caused by the **hepatitis B virus (HBV)**, which can be contracted by contact with the infected blood and body fluids, for example as the result of infected blood transfusions, unprotected sex, or when intravenous (IV) drug users share needles. Pregnant women infected with HBV can pass the infection onto their babies during childbirth. Hepatitis B can cause very serious and potentially fatal health complications including Liver failure, Liver cancer, and cirrhosis. No cure for the disease exists, but vaccination can prevent the disease. The symptoms of Hepatitis B include fatigue, nausea,

vomiting, unintended weight loss, abdominal pain, dark urine, joint pain, and **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes).

- **Hepatitis C:** is generally considered the most serious of the hepatitis virus infections. Hepatitis C is a serious Liver infection caused by the **hepatitis C virus (HCV)**, which can be contracted by contact with the infected blood, for example as the result of infected blood transfusions, or when intravenous (IV) drug users share needles. HCV is particularly dangerous because those infected show no symptoms until serious and irreversible Liver damage occurs decades after they were infected. In the earlier stages, Hepatitis C causes symptoms like slight fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, muscle and joint pain, and abdominal tenderness. However, in later stages, decades after infection, Hepatitis C can cause more serious versions of these symptoms, fever, and **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes).
- **Hepatitis D, E, and G:** are other forms of the hepatitis virus that can cause the Liver to become inflamed and reduce its ability to function.
- **Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD):** is a term used to describe a range of conditions that afflict people who consume little or no alcohol, and is most common in middle-aged overweight people who may also have diabetes and high cholesterol and triglyceride levels. The mildest of these conditions is **steatosis**, which occurs when fat accumulates in the Liver, a condition that usually causes no Liver damage. **Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH)** is more serious and is associated with potentially damaging inflammation of the Liver and sometimes the formation of fibrous tissue in the Liver. In some cases, NASH can progress to cirrhosis or Liver cancer. In the early stages, NAFLD causes mild, if any, symptoms such as fatigue and slight abdominal pain. In later stages, NAFLD can cause fatigue, nausea, fatigue, weakness, unintended weight loss, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, dark urine, confusion, memory loss, itching, swelling in the legs and feet, enlarged veins (which may exhibit as small red spider veins under the skin, or bleeding from the digestive tract), and **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes). The main treatments for NAFLD include dietary and life style changes, to promote exercise, weight loss, diabetes control, and the administering of cholesterol-lowering medications.
- **Primary Biliary Cirrhosis:** is a disease which slowly destroys the Liver's bile ducts, reducing the Liver's ability to transport bile, a fluid essential for digestion and removal of harmful substances from the body. The slow destruction of the bile ducts allows harmful substances to build up in the Liver and can also cause cirrhosis. The exact cause of Primary Biliary Cirrhosis has not currently been determined, but genetic, environmental, and autoimmune factors are suspected. In the early stages, this condition causes fatigue, itching, and dry eyes and mouth (**sicca syndrome**). In later stages, the disease causes **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), **hyperpigmentation** (dark skin), **edema** (swollen feet), **ascites** (swollen abdomen), **xanthomas** (cholesterol deposits), digestive problems, and **Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)**. The condition is currently incurable, but the symptoms can be alleviated and complications prevented with medications and treatment.

- **Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis:** is a disease that causes inflammation, hardening and scarring of the bile ducts inside and outside the Liver, and this impedes the flow of bile through the ducts and reduces the Liver's ability to function properly. The condition is also often associated with **Inflammatory Bowel Disease**. The exact cause of Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis has not currently been determined, but autoimmune factors are suspected. The symptoms include abdominal pain, fatigue, nausea, itchiness, and **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes). The disease progresses slowly, and leads to Liver disease and failure. Various medications can improve the symptoms, but a Liver transplant is the only cure for this condition.
- **Toxic Hepatitis:** is inflammation of the Liver that occurs when your liver is damaged by toxic chemicals, drugs, or certain other poisonous chemicals that may enter the body. In some cases, Toxic Hepatitis may develop within hours or days of exposure to a toxin, but in other cases it may take months for symptoms to appear. Toxic Hepatitis can permanently damage the Liver, and potentially cause cirrhosis and liver failure. The main symptoms of Toxic Hepatitis include abdominal pain, nausea, fever, confusion, fatigue, vomiting, **jaundice** (yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes), dark urine, unintended weight loss, and/or loss of appetite.
- **Wilson's Disease:** is an inherited disorder that causes excess copper to accumulate in the Liver, brain, and other vital organs. Copper plays a key role in the development of healthy nerves, bones, skin, to name a few. Normally, copper is absorbed from the food we eat, and any excess is excreted through Bile, an essential digestive fluid produced in the Liver. However, sufferers of Wilson's Disease cannot eliminate excess copper, and instead, over years, it accumulates to life-threatening levels. People with Wilson's Disease are born with the condition, however, symptoms may not occur until the age of 30 or even later.
- If left untreated, Wilson's Disease is fatal. However, when diagnosed early, Wilson's Disease is treatable, allowing sufferers to live normal lives.
- The symptoms of Wilson's Disease are very wide reaching and can include problems with the Liver, eyes, Kidneys, bones, as well as various neurological problems, behavioral problems, and psychological problems.

Stomach Disorders

Stomach Disorders include any medical conditions or health complaints that afflict or originate in the Stomach. The Stomach consists of powerful muscles whose function is to churn and mix the food, while glands in the walls of the Stomach secrete acids and enzymes which chemically break down the food into very small particles and molecules, so that these can be processed in later stages of digestion. The Stomach is absolutely essential to digestion, and any loss of function can cause very serious health consequences.

Stomach Disorders include the following conditions:

- **Dumping Syndrome (also called Rapid Gastric Emptying):** is a term used to describe the symptoms that may develop in people who have had surgery to remove all or part of their stomach, or have had part or most of their stomach bypassed to help lose weight. Dumping Syndrome occurs when the undigested and unprocessed contents of the Stomach are transported or "dumped" into the small intestine too soon for it to properly deal with the material. The symptoms of Dumping Syndrome appear within a few hours of eating and may range from mild to severe. The symptoms include abdominal cramps, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, lightheadedness, bloating, belching, fatigue, and even heart palpitations and increased heart rate
- **Gastritis:** is a term used to describe a group of related medical conditions which are characterized by inflammation of the stomach lining, which may be caused by bacterial infection, stomach ulcers, traumatic injury, the use or overuse of certain medications, such as pain relievers, and other causes. The condition may have a sudden onset (**Acute Gastritis**), or it may slowly develop over a period of time (**Chronic Gastritis**). The main symptoms of Gastritis include a burning pain in the upper abdomen, and sometimes bloating, belching, nausea, and/or vomiting. Depending on the cause for the condition, dietary and life style changes may be sufficient to treat the condition, otherwise a range of medications can help, such as **Antacids** and **Acid Blockers**.
- **Gastroparesis:** is a condition in which stomach muscles don't function properly and this prevents the stomach from fully emptying its contents into the Small Intestine. This condition can interfere with digestion, play havoc with blood sugar levels, cause problems with nutrition, and also cause nausea, vomiting, heartburn, abdominal pain, and unintentional weight loss. Gastroparesis is currently incurable, however, a range of treatments can help to greatly reduce the impact of the condition, such as dietary and life style changes, medications that increase stomach contractions, and also any treatments required for other conditions caused by the condition, such as **Diabetes**.
- **H. Pylori Infection:** occurs when conditions in the Stomach or the first part of the Small Intestine allow the bacterium **Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori)** to increase in numbers well beyond the levels in which it is normally found. The increase in Helicobacter pylori numbers can cause inflammation of the lining of the Stomach and even Stomach ulcers, and may also contribute towards Stomach cancers and other Digestive System cancers (See section **4.3 Colon Cancer And Other Digestive Cancers**). The main symptoms of H. Pylori Infection include abdomen pain or burning, loss of appetite, weight loss, nausea, vomiting, excessive burping, bloating, bloody vomit, and bloody or black tarry stools. Antibiotics are used to reduce H. pylori bacteria back to safe levels.
- **Nonulcer Stomach Pain (formally called Nonulcer Dyspepsia):** is a fairly common and sometimes long lasting (chronic) gnawing upper abdominal pain that isn't caused by ulcers or other digestive problems. Nonulcer Stomach Pain is disorder of the upper

gastrointestinal system, which the Esophagus, Stomach, and first part of the Small Intestine (*duodenum*). The symptoms of this condition are similar to those of **Peptic Ulcers** and include pain and discomfort in the upper abdomen, bloating, belching, nausea, and flatulence.

- **Peptic Ulcer**: are open sores on the lining of the Esophagus, Stomach or Small Intestine (*duodenum*). Doctors used to believe that Peptic Ulcers were caused by stress or too much spicy food, but they now know that the condition is instead caused by bacterial infection, the use or overuse of some medications, and the reflux of Stomach acid back up into the Esophagus. The symptoms caused by Peptic Ulcers include pain and discomfort in the upper abdomen, bloating, belching, nausea, and flatulence, but may also include chest pain, unexpected weight loss, dark, tarry stools, and vomiting of black fluid. The condition is fairly common, and is usually treated with a range of medications including antibiotics, acid blockers, and antacids.
- **Stomach Polyps**: are small clumps of cells that forms on the lining of the Stomach. There are three main types of Stomach Polyps: **Hyperplastic Stomach Polyps**, **Fundic Gland Stomach Polyps**, and **Adenomas**. Stomach Polyps are very rare and usually do not cause any symptoms or ill effects. As a result, doctors usually only discover them when testing for other conditions. In some rare cases, Stomach Polyps can develop into cancer.
- **Zollinger-Ellison Syndrome**: is a very rare and complex condition in which one or more tumors form in the Pancreas or Duodenum (the upper part of the Small Intestine). The tumors are called **gastrinomas** because they secrete large amounts of the hormone **gastrin**, which in turn causes excessive Stomach acid production. This excess acid can cause peptic ulcers. The main symptoms include burning, aching, gnawing discomfort in the upper abdomen, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, bleeding, and weight loss.

Maintaining a Healthy Digestive System

A range of techniques can help a person to reduce their risks of developing a Digestive System Disorders. These techniques fall into the following broad categories:

- Dietary, Exercise, and Life Style Guidelines
- Self Care Techniques

Each of these categories are discussed in the sections below.

Dietary, Exercise, and Life Style Guidelines

A person can reduce their risks of developing a range of Digestive System Disorders, and add many more years of healthy, active time to their life span, by:

- Avoiding and taking precautions against disease, such as being properly vaccinated and seeking early diagnosis and treatment if you suspect health problems.
- Eating a healthy, high fiber diet including lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, while avoiding processed foods, fast foods, and foods that are high in salt, sugar, and/or fat. Please see my eBook on Nutrition for further details.
- Avoiding health hazards, such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and drug abuse. Please see my eBook on Quit Smoking for further details. Smoking also increases acid reflux and reduces saliva production. Saliva helps protect your Esophagus from Stomach acid.
- Maintain a positive mental attitude and keep active, especially during your retirement. Please see my eBook on Healthy Retirement for further details.
- Ensure that you get enough quality sleep each night. Please see my eBook on Sleeping Disorders for further details.
- Take steps to reduce the stress in your life. Please see my eBook on Stress Management for further details. Digestion slows during periods of stress, and this can cause or exacerbate Digestive system Disorders, such as Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD). Relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, and yoga, can help may help reduce stress.
- Incorporate at least 30 minutes of physical activity into your daily routine.
- Maintain a healthy body weight: please see my eBook on Nutrition for further details. Slimming down helps reduce the pressure on your Stomach, and this act alone can help relieve a range of Digestive System Disorders.

Self Care Techniques

In addition to the above Dietary, Exercise, and Life Style Guidelines, a range of Self Care Techniques can also help you maintain a healthy digestive system.

The following Self Care Techniques can help a person to reduce their risks of developing a range of Digestive System Disorders:

- **Eat Small Meals:** eat small meals regularly throughout the day, rather than a single large meal. Large meals can stretch and bloat your Stomach, causing enormous stress on your Digestive System.
- **Avoid Problem Foods:** avoid or moderate your consumption of the alcohol, caffeinated drinks, chocolate, spicy foods, acidic foods (such as citrus fruits and tomato-based foods), onions, peppermint, and spearmint, all of which can inflame parts of the digestive tract and also increase production of Stomach acid, leading to irritation and/or inflammation of parts of the digestive tract.
- **Limit fatty foods:** fatty foods relax the lower esophageal sphincter and slow Stomach

- emptying, which increases the amount of time that acid can back up into your Esophagus.
- **Eating Habits:** sit up after you eat, and wait at least three hours before going to bed or taking a nap to allow food to progress from the Stomach to the small intestine.
- **Avoid exercise immediately after eating:** especially avoid strenuous or high impact activity. Try to wait at least two to three hours before you engage in any strenuous activity. Low-impact exercise, such as walking, is fine.
- **Elevate the head of your bed:** even by just 6 inches, as this can gravity to prevent Stomach acid from moving up into your Esophagus as you sleep. A foam wedge under the mattress can also do the required elevation. However, don't try to use extra pillows, as this will place more pressure on your abdomen.
- **Avoid tight fitting clothes:** such as belts, pants, and so on because they put pressure on your Stomach and restrict digestion.
- **Avoid certain medications (if possible):** which may cause or exacerbate heart burn and gastric reflux, such as:
 - Alendronate,
 - Calcium channel blockers,
 - Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen sodium,
 - Quinidine,
 - Sedatives and tranquilizers,
 - Tetracycline (antibiotic),
 - Theophylline,
- **Avoid Trauma:** avoid activities and sports that may cause damage to your body, especially your abdominal area in the case of Digestive System Disorders, or else wear suitable protective clothing to prevent damage and injuries.

Further Information on Digestive System Disorders

To find the Digestive System Disorders in your area using the internet, go the to Google web site : <http://www.google.com> and type in "Digestive System Disorders".

In the sections below, you can find some useful web links that can provide a wealth of information about Digestive System Disorders related clinical trials and research programs.

Web Links

The following are some useful web links that can provide a wealth of information about Digestive System Disorders.

Digestive System Disorders - MayoClinic.com

- <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/digestive-system/DG99999>

Digestive System Disorders - BlogSpot.com

- <http://digestivedisorders.blogspot.com/>

Digestive System Disorders - BMJ Publishing Group

- <http://clinicalevidence.bmj.com/ceweb/conditions/dsd/dsd.jsp>

Digestive System Disorders - Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, University of Iowa

- <http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/hardin/md/gastro.html>

Digestive System and Disorders - Gastroenterological Society of Australia

- http://www.gesa.org.au/digestive_system.cfm

Digestive System Disorders - Digestive-system-disorders.com

- <http://www.digestive-system-disorders.com/>

Digestive System Disorders - HealthSquare.com

- <http://www.healthsquare.com/fgpd/fg4ch05.htm>

Digestive System Disorders - Merck.com

- <http://www.merck.com/mmhe/sec09/ch118/ch118a.html>

Digestive System Disorders - National Center for Health Statistics

- <http://www.hhs-stat.net/scripts/topic.cfm?id=43>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/digestiv.htm>

Digestive System Disorders - Net Industries

- <http://science.jrank.org/pages/2079/Digestive-System-Disorders-digestive-system.html>

Digestive System Disorders - WebMD

- <http://emedicinehealth.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=60155>

Acronyms and Abbreviations

- GERD - Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease
- HAV - hepatitis A virus
- HBV - hepatitis B virus
- HCV - hepatitis C virus
- HH - Hereditary Hemochromatosis
- IBD - Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- IBS - Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- NAFLD - Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease
- NASH - Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis
- NSAIDs - Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs
- UTI - Urinary Tract Infection

Companion Remedies for Digestion

[Gastronic Dr.](#) - Promotes overall digestive health and functioning

[Digest Assist](#) - Helps maintain digestive comfort and promotes healthy digestion

[Digestion Tonic](#) - Promotes healthy and trouble-free digestion and digestive balance

[Natural Moves](#) - Helps maintain healthy bowel movements and regular open bowels

[Gasolve Relief](#) - For overall digestive health and to prevent embarrassment after meals

[Tummy Trumbles](#) - Promotes normal bowel activity and healthy, firm stools in children.

[Worm Dr.](#) - Promotes digestive health and prevention of intestinal worms in adults and children.

[KiddieVom Sprinkles](#) - Aids in digestive support, and helps relieve nausea and vomiting in children.

For Guaranteed, Effective, 100% Natural [Herbal Remedies](#) , please visit [Native](#)

Remedies

NaturalEco Organics is where we recommend you go for Organic, natural, chemical-free products and quality remedies for a safe, healthy journey for Mom and Baby, from Pregnancy to baby's Nursery!

Mountain Rose Herbs is where NHH recommends you purchase all of your Bulk Herbs, Spices, Teas and single oils!

Are you looking for quality Vitamins, diet aids and health Supplements? Visit the Health Supplement Shop - highly recommended by NHH!



Nutra-Mune

Nourish your defense system with Nutrapathics Nutra-Mune!



Kidshield Immune Spray

KidShield by Symbiotics has a delicious Tutti Frutti flavor children love.



Family Defense Immune Spray

Enhances immune activity. This immune balancing action is important for your family!



Colostrum Plus Immune

Symbiotics Multi-Nutrient Immune Formula provides extra support when your body is under stress.



Getting & Staying Healthy - Naturally!

The human body is a highly complex mechanism. Body or physical health refers to the overall condition of that system. We say that **optimal physical health** is achieved when the body is free from disease, abnormality and injury, and is able to function well.

However, often the body does not function well when it is attacked by environmental elements, genetic malfunction, injury, and biological intrusions. These factors can result in a multitude of ailments that affect the thyroid and adrenal glands, as well as the liver and pancreas. They can cause damage to the respiratory system (bronchitis, asthma, etc), hinder digestive processes, and even cause cancer.

Whether you're a parent or child, man or woman, young or old, staying healthy is very important. **Maintaining an individual's overall wellbeing** can involve treating everything from colds and flu, to cuts and scrapes, and sometimes even embarrassing conditions like bad breath, hemorrhoids, or body odor.

Keeping the right tools on hand (both treatments and information) will **prevent frustration and help in the time of crisis**; even if the crisis is just a bruised knee from a bicycle fall, a sore elbow from too much tennis, the sniffles, or a quick immunity boost in hopes of avoiding the seasonal cold.

At Native Remedies you will find a comprehensive set of herbal remedies to help you manage and optimize your physical health – naturally and safely.

View Natural Products for Body & Physical Health

- Thyroid & Adrenal
- Colds, Flu & Respiratory

- [Liver & Pancreas](#)
- [Hair Loss](#)
- [Immune System](#)
- [Respiratory](#)
- [Detox & Cleansing](#)
- [Embarrassing Conditions](#)

- [Digestion](#)
- [Infections, Cuts & Bruises](#)
- [Pain & Recovery](#)
- [Addictions](#)
- [Ear Health](#)
- [Energy Levels](#)
- [Joints & Muscles](#)
- [Others](#)

Two Important Differences in Native Remedies Products

We use the **Full Spectrum Method** of extraction to create our products. Many *so-called natural remedies* are manufactured using standardized extractions which – although often cited as being more scientific method – is not approved by the manufacturers of holistic medicines.

To us, it makes little sense for companies to go the natural route, while being unable to guarantee that their product is free of contamination with chemicals known to be harmful to health! Using the Full Spectrum Method helps us to maintain the integrity, balance and therapeutic effect of herbs with the least risk of side effects or harm to your health!

Read more about the our [*Manufacturing & Full Spectrum Approach*](#) »

We utilize a unique **dual-modality approach** to complete holistic wellness because we know that natural medicine works best in combination (herbal, homeopathic, flower essences and tissue salts) for fast relief and long-term care. Our approach provides a complete solution by offering OTC homeopathic remedies for relief of symptoms as well as compound herbal remedies for complete support of your physical, emotional and mental well-being.

While each of our natural remedies works well on its own to address a specific body function or relieve a particular symptom, we believe that by combining our herbal and homeopathic remedies you will find a complete solution that is safe and highly effective.

Read more about the our [*Dual-Modality Approach*](#) »

The importance of Omega-3 fatty acids

Scientists have established the effectiveness of [Omega 3](#) in a number of health areas, including your Heart, Brain, Joints, Skin, Immune system, Vision, and Digestion. Like any product on the market today there are 'good [fish oils](#)' and there are 'bad fish oil'!

With a bad one you may be unwittingly introducing substances into your body that you DO NOT want... such as Mercury and PCB's for example. We impose tougher standards on the purity of our [fish oil](#) than any other known manufacturer. [DHA](#) is the most important fatty acid in the human brain.

High in [DHA](#) and proven to be pure and free of contaminants the [Xtend-Life](#) brand is considered to be the 'Rolls Royce' of concentrated [Omega 3 fish oils](#) at an affordable cost and has been enjoyed by thousands of customers in more than 40 countries for the last eight years.

Don't forget a good multi-vitamin!

[Xtend-Life Multi-Xtra](#) is a natural multi vitamin/supplement using only the finest natural vitamins available on the market today. Some manufacturers call the vitamins they use in their products '[whole food](#)' vitamins, but that is somewhat misleading.

They are natural but they are grown using bio-technology and are not extracted directly from plants. What is important is that we do NOT use [vitamins](#) which are derived from petrochemicals. [Multi-Xtra](#) contains 48 bio-available ingredients.

Unlike a 'normal' multi it contains much more than just a basic vitamin/mineral mix. [Multi-Xtra](#) is probably the best multi vitamin/mineral supplement in the world and undoubtedly provides the best value for money available anywhere.