

Sowing the Seeds of Strong Digestion

Because prevention is better than cure.

by Isadora Tavens

*It's been said that you are what you eat.
In reality we are what we digest and assimilate!*

Here are some simple ideas from traditional cultures and contemporary holistic health practices to maximize digestion.

Drink a cup of **hot herbal tea** every morning 10 minutes or more before breakfast to awaken the stomach. To support liver health a cup of warm water with freshly squeezed lemon juice in warmed water is helpful.

Take digestive bitters 15 to 30 minutes before meals (Do not take if you have ulcers or gastric reflux unless advised by your healthcare practitioner). Good choices include: **Flora Gallexier, Planetary Formulas Grape Digestive Bitters, Cedar Bear Steven's Bitters** or **Herb Pharm Gentian**. Swedish Bitters formulas contain senna (as do most "dieters tea") which can be habit forming. It is recommended that Swedish Bitters only be used several times a year for several weeks only at a time.

Calm and center before meals. Breathe and relax the stomach. Dr. Bernard Jensen, one of the fathers of natural healing in the United States, said, "The mind churns up more acids than anything else." Chew food well. The slogan to keep in mind: "drink your food and chew your juices."

Eat breakfast. Skipping breakfast means that you're running on your nerves until lunchtime. Further, traditional cultures say when a hungry stomach is empty for too long gas is formed.

Eat lots of cooked or raw dark leafy green vegetables, squash and pumpkin. The health promoting qualities of these vegetable superfoods make them essential to superior health. Eat organic!

Aim to eat at least three different colored vegetables at lunch and dinner. This helps to ensure the intake of vitamins and minerals from across the nutritional spectrum.

Consider supplementing with vegetable source food enzymes taken with meals. Top of the line: **Enzymedicia Digest** or **Digest Gold**. Consult your health care practitioner before taking food enzymes if you have stomach ulcers, gastric reflux or other digestive concerns.

After meals drink a hot cup aromatic herbal tea or take a few drops of an herbal extract to support digestion. Good choices include: **peppermint, fennel seeds, caraway seeds, dill seeds, ginger** or **chamomile**, Helpful teas include: **Traditional Medicinals Eater's Digest, All Goode Digestabil-i-Tea**.

Chew **mukwas seed blend** (without oil) available in East Indian grocery stores. My all time favorite is **Herb Pharm Peppermint Spirits**. A few drops on the tongue or in hot water whenever possible is a quick and easy way to support digestion and move gas.

Avoid drinking iced beverages with or after meals. This includes ice water. Avoid chilled desserts after meals. Cold constricts the process of digestion.

Eat fruit away from meals. Eat melons, including watermelon, alone or leave them alone as they digest in just 20 minutes. When mixed with other foods in the stomach which take longer to digest gas and discomfort often result. Think about how you felt in the past after eating watermelon at a picnic.

Drink most of your liquids in between meals.

A good recommendation from East Indian Ayurvedic Medicine is to walk at least 100 steps after each meal.

Avoid aspirin, tobacco, and coffee. Minimize orange juice, white grapefruit juice, tomatoes and white sugar as they create great acidity in the body.

Take probiotic acidophilis to 'sweeten' digestion. Top of the line: **Bio-K Plus** (biokplus.com).

If advised by your healthcare practitioner occasional short-term fasts can give the digestive system a well deserved rest. This is best done with proper supervision.

On the non-physical level, digestion is contentment. Work to release anger, frustration, and resentment from your life. Avoid eating while watching television, especially the evening news. Discuss family problems away from meal times. Create peace within and around you. Allow the mind to dwell on peaceful and uplifting thoughts. Gratitude for the abundance in your life creates joy.

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**Isadora Tavens, Practical Nurse~Herbalist
Flower Essence Practitioner**

P.O. Box 2802
Negril, Jamaica
(876) 884-5494

US Voice Mail (773) 509-8586
isadora55@yahoo.com
www.isadoraflovers.com



Isadora is available for telephone consultations and to travel for consultations and classes.