

## Tips for Good Digestive Health

Anyone can develop digestive problems at any age, but they are more likely to happen as we get older. Prevention is the best medicine for health problems, including digestive system issues, for people of all ages. It is a good idea to make healthy eating a priority, as well include regular physical activity as part of your life.

Some digestive disorders are caused by changes that happen in the digestive tract with age. Common digestive system disorders include constipation, diverticular disease, ulcers and stomach bleeding, swallowing problems, colon polyps and heartburn.

Here are some tips for protecting your digestive health and overall well-being.

- **Eat more fiber.** As we age, the digestive tract slows down, just like other bodily functions. Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. Make half your grain choices whole grains.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Drinking water and other fluids such as orange juice with pulp, can keep you hydrated and help ease constipation.
- **Stay active.** In addition to its other health benefits, regular physical activity can help prevent constipation.
- **Manage your weight.** Many health problems can be prevented by maintaining a healthful weight, which also can reduce the number of medications you need to take. Medications can cause digestive side effects. Limit the fat in your diet, choose healthful portions and select whole foods instead of processed foods to help you manage your weight.
- **Check your medication.** Many medications used to manage chronic conditions such as arthritis and high blood pressure can have digestive tract side effects. If you take a diuretic, you are at increased risk for dehydration.
- **Get regular health screenings.** Talk to your doctor about any concerning symptoms you are having and ask about regular screenings. According to 2018 guidelines, people at average risk for colon cancer should begin screening at 45.

USDA recommends that women should aim for 25 grams of fiber per day, while men should target 38 grams per day. Adding more fiber to your diet can be as simple as changing the foods you eat. Try adding extra vegetables to soups, stews and casseroles. Add more beans and peas to your diet. Simple swaps in foods can also help add fiber.

### Regular Foods

White bread  
White rice  
Canned fruit or juice  
Potato Chips  
Chocolate chips  
Tomato Soup  
Low-fiber cereal  
Sugar cookies  
White flour

### Higher-fiber Choices

Whole grain bread  
Brown rice  
Fresh fruit with skins  
Popcorn  
Raisins  
Lentil or split-pea soup  
Bran cereal  
Oatmeal raisin cookies  
Whole-wheat fiber