

# Digestive System

Our digestive system houses the seat of our power, literally, our *manipura* (or the solar plexus). It experiences the pain of living in a realm that does not recognize and actively suppresses your acknowledgement of your power. There is much healing and nourishment to bring to our gut so that our power may be restored.

## Role of the Digestive System

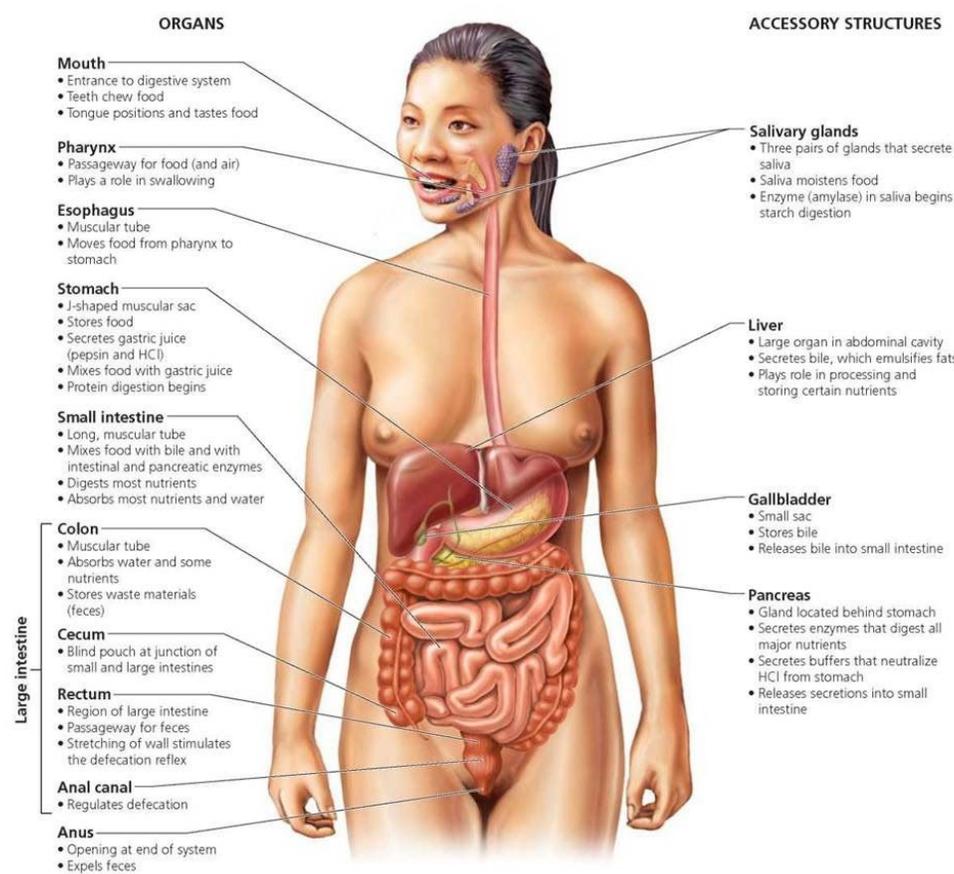
Digestion is important because your body needs nutrients from food and drink to work properly and stay healthy. Proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and water are nutrients. Your digestive system breaks nutrients into parts small enough for your body to absorb and use for energy, growth, and cell repair.

It does this by:

- Proteins break into amino acids
- Fats break into fatty acids and glycerol
- Carbohydrates break into simple sugars

## Parts of the Digestive System

The Digestive System is composed of four important parts: 1) the gastrointestinal tract (includes the esophagus, stomach, small + large intestine), 2) pancreas, gallbladder & liver; 3) enzymes, hormones, nerves & blood; 4) mesentery. The mesentery is a vital stretch of tissue that supports and positions all organs in place so that they can facilitate the digestive process.



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## How the Digestive System Works: The Digestive Process

- **Mouth:** The mouth is the beginning of the digestive tract and digestion. Chewing breaks the food into pieces that are more easily digested, while saliva releases enzymes with food to begin the process of breaking it down into a form your body can absorb and use: carbohydrates into sugars.
- **Esophagus:** Located in your throat near your trachea (windpipe), the esophagus receives food from your mouth when you swallow. Using a series of muscular contractions (peristalsis), the esophagus delivers food to your stomach.
- **Stomach:** The stomach is a hollow organ that holds food while it is being mixed with strong enzymes that continue the process of breaking down food into a usable form. They are released into the small intestine.
- **Small intestine:** a 22-foot long muscular tube that breaks down food using enzymes released by the pancreas and bile from the liver. Peristalsis works to move food through and mixing it with digestive secretions from the pancreas and liver.
- **Pancreas:** The pancreas releases digestive enzymes into the duodenum (first segment of the small intestine), which break down protein, fats, and carbohydrates. The pancreas also makes insulin, secreting it directly into the bloodstream, supporting the metabolization of sugar.
- **Liver:** The liver processes the nutrients absorbed from the small intestine, releases bile into the small intestine to digest fat, and converts raw material into necessary chemicals the body needs to function. The liver also detoxifies potentially harmful chemicals. It breaks down and secretes many drugs.
- **Gallbladder:** The gallbladder stores and concentrates bile, and then releases it into the duodenum to help absorb and digest fats.
- **Colon (large intestine):** a 6-foot long muscular tube that connects the small intestine to the rectum, responsible for processing waste so that emptying the bowels is easy and convenient.
- **Rectum:** an 8-inch chamber connecting the colon to the anus to receive stool, letting the person know that there is stool to be evacuated, and to hold the stool until evacuation happens.
- **Anus:** a 2-inch long canal consisting of the pelvic floor muscles specialized to detect rectal contents, letting you know whether the contents are liquid, gas, or solid. It keeps us continent when we are asleep or otherwise unaware of the presence of stool. When we get an urge to go to the bathroom, we rely on our external sphincter to hold the stool until reaching a toilet, where it then relaxes to release the contents.

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## Nourishing the Digestive System

Our Digestive Systems require daily and active care to assured that food is properly converted energy, in order to maintain their balance we can use the following methods to support their daily and lifetime health.

Methods, techniques and therapies for nourishing the Digestive System through a holistic and intersectional lens:

- Drink plenty of water
- Eating a high-fiber diet
- Eating both soluble (oats, seeds, nuts, fruits, vegetables) and insoluble (grains) fiber
- Limit foods high in fats
- Increasing probiotics into meals
- Maintain regular eating times
- Invite exercise and movement consistently
- Reducing stress

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## Herbal Actions for the Digestive System

- **Diuretic:** causes an increased passing of urine
  - Stimulant Diuretic: Direct action on the kidneys  
Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), Pipsissewa (*Chimaphila umbellata*),
  - Relaxant Diuretic: Brings on urination when there is excessive heat, burning, irritability, tension, and potentially dryness  
Marshmallow (*Althea officinalis*), Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Cornsilk (*Zea mays*), Chickweed (*Stellaria media*), Couchgrass (*Elymus repens*)
- **Carminative:** supports the passing of gas  
Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*), Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*)
- **Demulcent:** relieves inflammation or irritation

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Colt's Foot (*Tussilago farfara*), Linden (*Tilia* spp), Marshmallow (*Althea officinalis*),  
Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), Cornsilk (*Zea mays*), Couchgrass (*Elymus repens*)

- **Diaphoretic:** induces perspiration
- **Antilithic:** plants who treat kidney stones and the accompanying symptoms  
Gravelroot (*Eupatorium purpureum*), Stoneroot (*Collinsonia canadensis*), Uva ursi  
(*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

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## Licorice Root

*Glycyrrhiza glabra*

licorice, liquorice, sweet root, gan cao, gan-zao, Chinese licorice



**Actions:** relaxing expectorant (soothes coughs), demulcent (soothing effect on contact), anti-inflammatory (via the body's own corticosteroid mechanisms), antiulcer against gastrointestinal ulcers, laxative, adaptogen tonic (increases resistance to the effects of physical, mental and emotional stress), hepatoprotective (protects the liver), antiviral, antifungal, antibacterial, antioxidant, antitumor, hormonal regulation

### Spiritual Medicine:

- Associated with Venus
- Used to help souls pass easily into the next life
- Used in love spells to ensure fidelity
- Brings passion
- Protective magick
- In Hoodoo, it is used in cleansing bath to encourage common sense

### Physical Medicine

- Digestive disorders - Peptic ulcer, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, chronic gastritis, heartburn, constipation
- Immune - infections, including hepatitis, herpes, urinary tract infections, respiratory infections, allergies, autoimmune disorders
- Inflammatory conditions - including eczema, psoriasis, arthritis, asthma, systemic lupus erythematosus
- Primary adrenocortical insufficiency, such as Addison's disease

## Milk Thistle

*Silybum marianum*

blessed milkthistle, Marian thistle, Mary thistle, Saint Mary's thistle, Mediterranean milk thistle



**Actions:** antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, demulcent, galactagogue, cholagogues, antibiotic, anti-cancer, liver protector

### Spiritual Medicine:

- Associated with Mars
- Powers of strength, protection, healing, hex breaking
- Calls on the medicine of snake, protection and vitality
- Healing spells for depression

### Physical Medicine

- High in vitamin c + e
- Treating or preventing liver damage caused by alcohol, drugs or toxic chemicals
- Treatment of chronic hepatitis
- Supportive to liver detoxification + health
- Protective against cancer by boosting the immune system + antioxidant protection
- Supportive to heartburn, bowel disease, enlarged prostate, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease

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## Peppermint

*Mentha piperita*



**Actions:** stimulant, carminative, choleric, antispasmodic, diuretic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, astringent, antibacterial, antimicrobial, antiviral, coolant, anti-allergic, analgesic

### Spiritual Medicine:

- Associated with Virgo and the element of air
- Refreshing
- Bringing clarity + invigoration to mind
- Protection during sleep

### Physical Medicine

- Immune booster; fights infections, viral illnesses + other infectious disease
- Helps relax and calm the mind
- Supports with headaches + migraines
- Support inflamed conditions on the skin or at the joints
- Relieves nausea
- Promotes healthy digestion as it is rich in fiber + high antioxidant
- Works to detoxify toxins in accumulated chemicals
- Reduces fever

## Slippery Elm

*Ulmus rubra*

Moose elm, rock elm, Indian elm, red elm, sweet elm, ulmi rubrae cortex, ulmaceae, winged elm, ulmus fulva michaux



**Actions:** demulcent, emollient, expectorant, diuretic, nutritive, coolant, nutritive, laxative

### Spiritual Medicine:

- Connects you to a water element
- Works to clear your throat chakra
- Clears your name from gossip

### Physical Medicine

- Supportive to digestive health
- Treats digestive disorders like diarrhea, colic, gastroenteritis, irritable bowel syndrome
- Treats skin conditions such as eczema, boils, burns, cuts
- Great as a cough remedy in treating sore throats (anti-inflammatory conditions)
- Supports circulation
- Healing properties support with burns, abrasions, serious wounds