

Essentials of Great Digestion Silas Rosenblatt, R Ac

In Chinese medicine digestion is essential for good immunity and health. It is important to remember that it is not just what we eat, but also what we digest that matters for vitality. For a moment imagine your belly as a cauldron with a flame providing heat from below to break the food down so all the essential nutrients present can be absorbed. The strength of this metabolic process is dependant on the intensity of the fire. If our digestive fire is weak we are not able get what we need from our food. Furthermore, incomplete digestion results in metabolic waste known as dampness or phlegm in Chinese Medicine.

Here are a few guidelines to consider:

- **Reduce or eliminate foods that are difficult to digest or are known allergies** – particularly refined sugars and oils, dairy products, sweeteners and wheat products. Seeing as a bulk of the North American diet includes these items, it may take some work to find suitable alternatives. Good sweeteners include Stevia extract (found in most health food stores), rice syrup, barley malt extract and small amounts of maple syrup or natural raw cane juice sugar. Alternatives to wheat products include rye bread, rice cakes, oats, millet, corn or brown rice pasta. Alternatives to dairy products include organic soy, rice or almond milk, goat or sheep dairy and cheese.
- **In general emphasize fresh, organic, lightly cooked or steamed vegetables.** Small amounts of lean animal based proteins as well as legumes should be cooked thoroughly in stews or soups. Also include modest amounts of whole grains like brown rice or Qinoa, millet and oats for fiber.
- **Avoid eating raw food particularly in winter.** - Raw food is very cooling and can put out the digest fire when consumed in excess amounts. It is recommended to lightly steam or cook your veggies to preserve natural enzymes. Stews, gruels and soups are the easiest to digest.
- **Avoid over eating or late night meals** – As a rule eat to the point of being 2/3 full. Eating beyond this point will likely make you feel sleepy and sluggish. According to Chinese Medicine the digestive system is weakest at this time. If you can take your last meal 3 hours before you go to bed.
- **When you eat, eat.** Try to avoid distractions like TV, work, arguments, when eating. Take the time to enjoy your food and the company you are with.
- **Tune into how you are feeling before and after eating** -This will help you to make more conscious food choices. Rather than feeling guilty for eating too many sweets, just notice how you feel afterwards. Over time you will naturally want to eat foods that make you feel good, rather than being motivated by guilt or shame to eat better. Often food choices are driven by unconscious needs for gratification or comfort rather than a need for nourishment. Bringing these unconscious patterns to light will eventually dis-empower them.
- **A note on food combining** - Some basic guidelines of food: are to keep sugar and fruit separate from proteins during meal times. The more the complex the meal is with many ingredients and forms of protein the harder it will be to digest. Try to keep your meals simple as possible, emphasizing fresh veggies and lean or legume based proteins.

- **Get out and move your body** – Light physical exercise, particularly walking improves peristalsis and circulation aiding the digestion process.
- **Wake up your GI system in the morning** - Drink a cup of warm lemon water first thing in the morning a half hour before breakfast. This prepares your digestive system for your daily meals.

Useful Products

Probiotics - Probiotics create good intestinal flora which are essential for assimilating nutrients from our food. This is particularly important after a course of antibiotics. Acidophilus and spore based probiotics like B. laterosporus and L Sporogenes. Products like Nature's Biotics and Primal Defense eradicate yeasts and parasites. Natural Factors Double Strength (10 billion active cells) is also effective. Take probiotics before bed time or first thing in the morning.

Digestive enzymes – Digestive enzymes help assimilation of nutrition and reduce metabolic wastes. A full spectrum digestive enzyme is recommended to be taken with each meal.

Recommended

Green Super Foods - Green super foods harmonize body acidity and are very cleansing. As well greens are high in essential nutrition which feed and restore normal cell function. Examples of useful greens include chlorella, barley grass, alfalfa, Wild Blue-green algae and Spirulina. Green food can be taken with meals 1 -2 times a day.