

DIGESTION AND ELIMINATION

It has been said "You are what you eat." We all understand the importance of eating nutrient-dense foods in order to achieve optimal health. A bigger issue, however, is how much of the nutrients in the foods you eat are actually absorbed and utilized? A more important and accurate statement might be "You are what you assimilate from what you eat".

The difference between the nutrients present in foods and how your body uses them represents the distinction between diet and nutrition. Diet is made up of what you eat. Nutrition is what your body does with the food.

So then, you may ask, is it possible to eat a very healthy, nutrient-rich diet and still not obtain adequate nutrition from the food consumed? The answer is YES!

Malabsorption is a term used to describe an overall reduction in digestive efficiency and performance. Many factors are involved with malabsorption - from stress to parasites. The human gastrointestinal tract is a complex system of mental, chemical, and mechanical functions.

Digestive symptoms are some of the most common complaints today in the U.S. Many people have acclimated so completely to their poorly functioning digestive tract, they may come to think it is normal. Symptoms like bloating, excessive flatulence, constipation, and diarrhea are quite common, and yet they are signs of a dysfunctional GI tract.

Here is a description of what optimal digestion looks like:

- Digestion starts in the brain. It begins when we anticipate the act of eating. When we see and smell food, our brain signals the release of

saliva. The enzymes in saliva, along with adequate chewing, begin the digestive process.

- Eating in a slow, thoughtful manner is extremely important. Multitasking or engaging in stressful activities while eating do not encourage healthy digestion.
- Eat until you are approximately 80% full. Complete satiety takes about 20 minutes, so stopping at 80% prevents that over-stuffed feeling. Since we don't have a gauge with which to measure our capacity, this takes practice. If you're not sure, wait 20 minutes and see if you are still hungry.
- After eating, the autonomic digestive functions take over. There should simply be a sense of satisfaction. Any excessive adverse symptoms like burping, belching, heartburn, reflux, bloating, abdominal discomfort, diarrhea, or constipation are not normal. These are all signs of a malfunctioning system.
- Normal elimination should happen at least once a day; 2-3 bowel movements per day are ideal.

There are many ways in which our delicate GI tracts can become imbalanced. Antibiotics, stress, poor diet, bacterial, fungal, or parasitic infections, and food sensitivities can all create havoc and lead to malabsorption.

If you have ongoing digestive discomfort, consider doing a [GI Panel](#). This is a comprehensive stool and saliva test, easily done at home, that will pinpoint exactly where the problem lies. It will evaluate all aspects of your digestive function and determine the presence of fungal, bacterial, or parasitic infections, and check antibody levels for four common food sensitivities: milk, soy, egg, and gluten (found in wheat, oats, rye, and barley) You may also consider just doing the [Leap - MRT](#).

Once we know what is creating havoc in your digestive system, we can utilize natural herbs and nutrients to address these issues and restore normal gut function. If you are living with chronic GI distress, make the decision to do this test and find out why!