

## BE WELL

### Soothe Your Stomach ... from Top to Bottom

By Debbie DeAngelo  
March 2023

---



Indigestion. Bloating. Stomach cramps. These are among the most common digestive woes that people live with on a daily basis. Ongoing symptoms send people running to the doctor in droves.

Most of us don't give a second thought to our digestion until it rebels. We fail to recognize that our actions largely influence the health of our stomach and colon, which are collectively referred to as the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Routinely thought of as a holding tank for our food, the GI tract is painfully unappreciated.

Since it's home to 70 percent of immune system cells, it plays a pivotal role in wellness and illness. Strong resistance to disease starts with well-functioning digestion. Additionally, the digestive system and brain are in constant communication with each other. This network of nerves, brain cells and neurotransmitters (brain chemical messengers) is referred to as our "second brain." The bridge between our brain and gut is responsible for the stress response of stomach churning and "butterflies," certain diseases, and overall mental health.

Whether your goal is to keep your body running smoothly or to alleviate digestive issues, the following steps are designed to support a healthy stomach and colon.

**Don't bite off more that you can chew.** Shoveling in your food and rushing through a meal puts you on the fast track to indigestion and bloating. Digestion starts in your mouth by chewing food thoroughly, so by the time it hits your stomach it's broken down. This allows your stomach to do its job more efficiently.

Focus on taking small bites and chewing them at least 25 times. By doing this, you'll automatically eat more slowly and feel full after eating less.

**Identify what trips your trigger.** Food intolerances often cause symptoms such as abdominal bloating, pain, reflux, and irritable bowel syndrome. Also, they can cause or exacerbate problems like eczema, psoriasis, sinus drainage, chronic muscle and joint pain, and fatigue or brain fog after eating. This is your body's way of relaying its distaste for what you're feeding it. Keep a food log to identify offensive foods and avoid foods that "don't agree" with you. If you suspect a food affects your physical or emotional well-being, then eliminate it for three weeks and evaluate how you feel.

**Bulk up:** Although people swear they eat plenty of fiber, the overwhelming majority do not. The average American consumes 15 to 20 grams of fiber daily, which falls considerably short of the recommended 25 to 35 grams. Roughage regulates elimination, removes toxins, and feeds the friendly bacteria that our intestines need. Further, it aids in feeling full after meals, reducing weight, lowering cholesterol, and regulating blood sugar. Target this fiber goal by eating at least one cup of vegetables at both lunch and dinner as well as at least two pieces of whole fruit each day. Remember, eating the skin or peel of the produce provides more fiber. Whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds will further bump you up towards your goal.

**Balance it out:** Our colon sports 300 to 500 hardworking strains of bacteria. Along with viruses and fungi, this is referred to as the microbiome, and like your fingerprint, each person's is unique. When the balance is disrupted, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, and decreased resistance to illness can occur. Along with fiber, fermented foods nourish these healthy bacteria, so be sure to eat sauerkraut and other fermented vegetables, yogurt, and kefir. For an extra boost, take a probiotic supplement daily. Look for a product with 30 billion colony forming units per dose as well as multiple strains of lactobacillus and bifidobacterium. Refrigeration will extend the longevity and viability of the probiotic.

And let's not forget our overworked stomach. Taking digestive enzymes containing lipase, to break down fats, amylase, to break down starch, and protease, to break down proteins, will assist your belly in absorbing maximal nutrition from your food. Many people find that it helps with indigestion and abdominal bloating too.

**Have help on hand:** Keep some remedies on hand for those times when you aren't feeling well. Ginger works for nausea, indigestion, and an upset stomach. Enteric coated peppermint capsules ease the intestinal spasms of irritable bowel syndrome, colitis, and Crohn's disease. Mixing a few drops of fennel oil into a tablespoon of olive or almond oil and rubbing it onto your abdomen relieves spasms and pain due to everything from bloating to an intestinal virus. Slippery

elm coats the GI tract to provide soothing protection against ulcers, gastritis, and a variety of bowel disorders.

Whether you're tired of popping antacids and fiber supplements, or you want to boost your immune system, paying attention to your digestion pays off. After all, if your stomach isn't happy, then the rest of your body isn't happy either.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debbie DeAngelo, RNC, BSN, is a holistic health coach, health correspondent for JET-TV and FOX 66 in Erie, Pennsylvania, and author of "Sudden Menopause." She is also a ballroom dance instructor. Debbie can be reached at [debbie@healthonheels.com](mailto:debbie@healthonheels.com).



[Subscribe to JES Publications Emails!](#)

[Support JES | Donate](#)

## In Case You Missed It

[Truth in Love | Classrooms, Not Communities, Are Appropriate Sites for Struggle and Conflict](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Parris J. Baker**

[Be Well | Dip Into the Best Olive Oil](#) written by health and wellness expert **Debbie DeAngelo**

[Book Notes #133 | Sporting America: Sports in American Society \(Part One\)](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Andrew Roth**

[The Great Impostor: Gannon College's Brush with Cinematic Fame](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. David Frew**



