



Digest these 5 Digestion Habits for Better Children's Health

Children's guts are more delicate than adults'. It takes less to send their little bodies into gastrointestinal distress. We can't stand to see them hurting! As parents, teachers and others who care for children, when they get sick, we can't help but think the worst. What if they get dehydrated by diarrhea? What if their chronic constipation lands them in the hospital? Could this constant tummy ache be a sign of a serious illness such as Crohn's disease or celiac disease?



Encourage kids to be active for better gastrointestinal health.

Barring a serious illness, parents can support their children's healthy gastrointestinal systems with a few simple habits. In fact, if you are following the *5 Children's Digestive Habits for Better Health* below and your child still has diarrhea, constipation, gas or other gut symptoms, it might help your doctor more easily diagnose a potential serious illness.

Let's think positive, though. A healthy gut helps fight off serious illnesses. It helps children feel better overall, with more energy and less fatigue. It promotes good bacteria, which we are learning could be an important factor in many illnesses and health conditions. If you teach your children

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the basics of good digestion through these five habits, you will give them a gift that lasts their lifetime.

5 Children's Digestive Habits for Better Health

1 Water Children Daily

Liquid is essential for healthy bowel movements. Without enough liquid inside of little ones' bodies, stools can get hard and difficult to pass, leading to constipation. Liquid also helps flush the body of toxins that can cause illness. It can be difficult to get children to drink water sometimes, and dehydration becomes a potential issue when they are playing and sweating out the moisture in their bodies.

To make drinking water more fun, allow children to choose a special cup or water bottle to carry with them. Add lemon juice or other fruit juices to gently flavor the water sometimes. Avoid drinks with high sugar content, but it's okay to offer the occasional cup of diluted juice. Even milk has water content that adds up in the body. Encourage sipping throughout the day, so children don't feel they have to drink large amounts of water at once.

2 Exercise Options

Keeping kids moving is more than a way to tire them out for bedtime! It helps the body process food and move waste through the intestinal system, not to mention making many other systems of the body work better. Exercise can help stimulate the urge to go to the bathroom, so it helps children who are potty training and reluctant to allow bowel movements.

What physical activity is best for your child? It depends on their individual interests. They might like playing sports, swimming or dancing. It doesn't have to be an organized sport. Simply spending time outdoors playing, going for walks with the family, visiting playgrounds or riding bikes on a regular basis will do the trick. Make exercise a fun priority, and your children will grow up believing it's one of the best parts of life.

3 Have Fun with Fiber

We don't usually think of fiber-rich foods as those children love to eat. However, with a little thought, you can come up with foods your children love (or at least will tolerate) to keep their little guts healthy. Begin when they are young to explain how their body works and identify foods that are important to gut health. Introducing fiber-rich foods early in their lives also will help them develop a taste for healthy foods. Most importantly, pair fiber-rich foods with other tasty treats and make eating fun! Adding fruit to whole grain cereal makes this fiber-rich food look and taste good to support children's gut health!



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Adding fruit to whole grain cereal makes this fiber-rich food look and taste good to support children's gut health!

Delicious foods that are good for kids' gastrointestinal health include whole grain tortillas and breads. Try fun whole grain breads such as pita pockets and English muffins. Although kids often are not crazy about rough granola-style cereals, many love raisin bran and cereals with dried berries. Add fresh fruit to make cereal even tastier. Find fun ways to fix baked potatoes, such as mashing and mixing them with other foods like steamed vegetables or setting up a baked potato bar with lots of fun, healthy topping choices. Don't forget about trail mixes (sans candy) and yogurt with granola. Choose Greek yogurt with live cultures and less sugar for probiotic support and add fresh fruit for a sweeter taste.

4 Promote Good Bacteria

Doctors, nutritionists and scientists are learning more all the time about ways a healthy gut supports the general health and well-being of children as well as adults. Doing what you can to promote your child's gut health could help fight off germs and build up their immune systems. In fact, 70 percent of the human immune system is in the digestive tract. Studies show probiotic supplements definitely reduce bouts of diarrhea. Other studies show a possible connection between good bacteria and childhood conditions such as autism, depression, irritable bowel syndrome and more.

To establish good gut health in your child's developing body, follow general advice such as reducing fat and sugar in your child's diet, as well as following the other guidelines in this article. Consider adding a probiotic supplement specially made for children such as Biovi™ Kids Probiotic to orchestrate the proper functions of good bacteria. Choose a supplement designed to survive stomach acid and antibiotics.

5 Soothe Away Stress

Stress is destructive for children of all ages. Among other things, it causes gastrointestinal issues including diarrhea and constipation. For many reasons, it's important to build a habit of stress relief. Together with the other good digestive habits listed here, stress management can help kids learn how to strengthen their digestive systems and realize all the associated benefits as they grow older.

You can help kids manage stress by noticing when something is bothering them, listening to them, helping them understand their feelings and find solutions for situations that might be bothering them. It's also important to manage the physical functions of stress. Help them get plenty of sleep, take rests during the day as appropriate for their age, and learn relaxation techniques that fit their personality. Teach them how to stretch their bodies, exercise, visualize positive things and more. You also can help by keeping things calm at stressful times of the day.

Children Learn Digestion Habits by Imitating Yours

One of the most powerful things you can do to help your children learn good digestive habits is to model them yourself. Make healthy food choices, getting plenty of sleep, exercising and practicing relaxation principles. A great side effect of modeling this good behavior: you'll be healthier, too, and enjoy your time with your children more.

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