

Why chew your food?

When discussing the issue of digestion, one thing that seems to get missed in the discussion is the importance of mastication. Not properly chewing your food will result in a number of digestive concerns. Though chewing your food will not resolve all of the compromises people are experiencing with their digestion, it is essential to understand how many functions are compromised when you don't chew your food. One of the ways to begin to understand this is to look at how many aspects of digestion are positively influenced by properly chewing your food.

First, when you chew your food thoroughly you slow down your mind, because chewing your food takes attention. When you eat you should be in a parasympathetic state. This is a nervous system function that provides for long-term survival. Therefore, it governs digestion, assimilation, elimination, sleep, healing, and the overall repair and maintenance of your body's many functions. The sympathetic nervous system, is responsible for all functions that have to do with short term survival and has a direct relation to stress, in that stress is what triggers the actions that lead to getting immediate concerns dealt with. If you are in a sympathetic state you are not in a good place to take in food because your blood supply and nervous response is not focused on the internal organs and their function, it is focused on your limbs and your brain, making them alert to react to external stimulus.. Most people eat on the run and in a sympathetic state. This is especially true at lunch, which should be the most important meal of the day. People tend to gulp down their food and their body's resources are not there to receive it or utilize it. And the lump in the gut fights for resources, sometimes till it rots. So, the first benefit of chewing your food thoroughly is that it takes time and intention and tends to bring the body into a parasympathetic state.

A very useful practice is, before you begin eating, ask yourself if your mind is busy on something else, are you revved up and emotional. If the answer is yes to either of those questions push your food a little way away from you and tell yourself that you will eat it when you are relaxed and ready to eat. With the food in front of you, you have a strong incentive to calm down, the body wants to eat and will bring you to the state you ask for, if you ask for it.

Once you are a little calmer you are already in a better state, but chewing your food slowly and thoroughly will bring you more deeply into a parasympathetic state. When you swallow your food it should be heavily coated with saliva, which contains enzymes which breakdown carbohydrates, and reduced to tiny bits, giving the enzymes your body produces the greatest access to surface area to activate

digestion. If your food enters your stomach already broken down into tiny bits, you take a lot of stress off the stomach. Unlike the mouth, the stomach does not contain teeth, and its ability to breakdown food is far more limited. In the stomach the food is churned, mixed by the squeezing motion of the stomach muscles. Hydrochloric acid is released to aid the breakdown of proteins. Most proteins foods are tough and require the teeth to break them down mechanically, allowing the stomach enzymes access to the food via increased surface area. If you swallow protein that is not properly broken down mechanically it can feel heavy in the gut. This is why so many people feel their digestion improves with a low protein diet. This is also why giving up high protein foods during a cleanse is efficient, because breaking down protein uses a lot of the body's energy and resources. It is much more work if the enzymes have to burn their way through great masses with limited surface area. Your body needs protein for building and repairing cells, so low protein diets don't suit most people in the long run. If you swallow your food unchewed the stomach has to produce a lot of enzymes and that can cause ulceration of the stomach lining and it can bubble up as reflux and burn the hiatus the joins the stomach and the esophagus and cause damage that is hard to repair. Because you need the stomach to ingest food it is not good to wound it, as it effects your ability to take in the fuel you need to survive and be healthy.

When the food leaves the stomach it is released in small amounts into the pylorus, the first section of the small intestine. In the pylorus the mascerated food is read for content. If it is not properly broken down it cannot accurately be read. The reading of content in the pylorus is done by receptors that send messages to other organs of the body to call in the additional enzymes that are needed to complete the digestion process. If the reading is partial, the digestion process will be partial . Until the body feels that it has the necessary enzymes organized the stomach will hold onto its content. This is a burden on the stomach, which serves, at this point, as a holding tank. The sugars and proteins will continue to breakdown while the food sits in the stomach and they begin to ferment when they sit too long and the outcome is local toxicity. When this happens the body is burdened with having to deal with the added complication and utility of the organs that are involved with toxic fermentation, namely the liver and spleen. This will cause gas and bloating and tends to feed the unhealthy bacteria in the small and large intestines. Most of digestion takes place in the small intestine which has neither teeth nor the muscular churning action of the stomach.

So, chewing your food promotes the best environment for digestion. If you gulp your food down and eat on the run you increase

the work of digestion in an un hospitable environment and risk causing damage to the mucous membranes which only have so much resistance to high acid content and toxicity.

Another feature of chewing your food is that you lower the risk of over eating, which is another burden on the stomach and intestines. If you eat slowly your receptors will have time to send a message to your brain saying that you are full, you have enough for now. If you gulp your food the receptors will not have time to send that message before your system is already overloaded.

Chewing your food thoroughly also exercises your teeth and stimulates the vitality of the socket and gums which hold the teeth in the jaw. We know that activity that causes muscles to stimulate the bone protects against bone loss and bone loss and decalcification is one of the many ways which teeth become loose in their sockets and contribute to plaque and bacteria getting under the gum line, which is a primary reason for tooth loss. Brushing your teeth thoroughly and flossing helps but it does not stimulate the tooth/socket interface and build a healthy influx of blood, which provides for the maintenance of teeth and gums, in the same way and to the same degree as chewing does. Chewing promotes healthy gums and teeth.

Taking wine with food, particularly red wine, is said to increase digestion effectiveness because it helps in the flow of digestive enzymes. It does this because it relaxes the person and promotes a parasympathetic state, conducive to digestion, and all the body's long term survival functions. Wine is also said to help the digestion of fats, which is a function of the liver and gall bladder. By aiding the breakdown of fats it is said to reduce the plaquing of the arteries and reduce the incidence of high cholesterol and heart disease. One of the ways this works is because the alcohol content of wine is a toxic to the liver and in low doses, small amounts, stimulates the defensive, and therefore, the protective function of the liver, which brings it into a higher level of function, in the short term, and in low doses. But wine is not the only way to get there. Chew your food, wine cannot do that for you.

Chewing your food:

- massively increases the effectiveness of digestion
- lowers the risk of indigestion , ulceration and reflux
- supports the proper production of enzymes and protects against their over production
- allows for greater absorption of nutrients
- aids elimination
- curbs overeating
- promotes healthy gums and teeth

- ensures long term survival by contributing vastly to you getting the nutrients you need to live a healthy life.