



Top tips for aiding digestion

Too much food and drink?

Keep these useful hints and homeopathic medicines in mind

General tips

- Drink a cup of boiled water in the morning before breakfast. This seems to cleanse the stomach and often works wonders.
- Eat slowly. One of the main causes of indigestion is unchewed food.
- Don't eat food "piping hot". Our stomachs are not meant to have hot foods inside them. A useful thing to remember is that if it is hot in the mouth it is hot in the stomach. This includes tea and coffee. Food and drinks that are too hot may disrupt enzymes and injure the lining of the stomach. So, always wait for it to cool.
- Don't eat on the hoof. Meals should be taken at a leisurely pace. If you eat on the move, there is more chance that digestion will not begin. Instead foods in the stomach and intestine will start to ferment, producing gases that bloat you.
- Avoid eating fruit with the meal. Tempting though it is, because it seems

lighter on the stomach than puddings, it is not good at the end of a meal. This is because fruit digests faster than dense proteins, so fermentation and gas accumulation may occur.

- If bloating is a persistent problem, try simplifying your meals. Instead of having lots of food groups at one meal try separating them. For example, proteins need acid enzyme digestive juices, whereas carbohydrates need alkaline enzyme digestive juices. When you have to break down both types all at once you are not achieving optimal enzymatic action, so some fermentation and gas accumulation may occur.
- Try taking slightly smaller servings and think twice about second helpings. As a good rule of thumb, try to get into the habit of estimating the quantity you allow yourself using "nature's food bowl". Cup your two hands together as if you were using them to make a bowl. The quantity of food that would fill that "bowl" should be your maximum at any meal.

- Make sure that you drink enough water. Ideally, hydrate your stomach with a glass of water half an hour before a meal.

Homeopathic medicines

Homeopathy has great proven worth in dealing with many digestive complaints. However, be aware of certain warning symptoms which should not be ignored. An early medical opinion and diagnosis is important in the following situations:

- sudden severe abdominal pain;
- vomiting, especially if accompanied by abdominal distension;
- weight loss which is not from deliberate dieting;
- alteration in the normal bowel habit, either with persistent looseness or constipation;
- bleeding from the back passage.

Heartburn

This symptom refers to the burning sensation that the individual experiences as acid is squirted into the oesophagus from the stomach. A sensation is felt

rising through the chest up to the back of the throat.

Calcarea carbonica is very good at relieving chronic heartburn in chubby people who get cramps in the stomach, really burning heartburn and who belch noisily. Often they get a sour taste in their throats after belching. Milk often disagrees with them and produces heartburn and indigestion, whereas for most people milk helps.

When heartburn and regurgitation occurs after only small snacks then **Lycopodium** will probably bring relief. Typically, the heartburn only spreads up as far as the Adam's apple, but it tends to last for hours at a time, despite antacids or milk. The stomach often feels bloated during these episodes.

Pulsatilla is indicated when heartburn is associated with the taste of a food taken hours before. Fatty foods, butter and pork seem to cause these bouts of heartburn, and it is more likely to occur when they are peeved about something or with someone. They rarely feel thirsty.



Dyspepsia

Dyspepsia is a pain or an uncomfortable feeling in the upper part of the abdomen, usually related to food or meals. It is what most people refer to as indigestion. It can occur at any age and about a quarter of the population will experience it at some time. There are many causes of dyspepsia, and if it is prolonged, a medical opinion should be sought.

A band-like pain in the upper abdomen which comes on when the person is hungry, and which is relieved for two or three hours after eating, only to recur again, calls out for **Anacardium**.

Indecisiveness is typical with someone in need of this remedy.

Dyspepsia associated with nausea, a gnawing pain in the upper abdomen and retching of mucus suggest the remedy **Argentum nitricum**. These folk are often hurried, full of fears, especially as they anticipate a meeting or event, and prone to bouts of loose motions.

Nux vomica is well known to people as a remedy of excess, or overindulgence. The pains classically come on about two hours after food. Like **Argentum nitricum** these people are hurried, but they are less likely to be fearful. Irritability and anger are more in keeping with their temperament.

By contrast, sweet, gentle and self-sacrificing people who experience flatulence and dyspepsia after too many starchy or fatty foods may need **Natrum carbonicum**. They cannot take milk and very often have multiple food allergies.

Phosphorus is extremely useful in people given to ready vomiting with their dyspepsia. They crave cold drinks, which seem to help for a short time, only to be vomited ten minutes or so later.

Bloating

Bloating may arise from excess gas in the stomach, small intestines or the colon.

Carbo vegetabilis is a useful remedy when the individual feels chilly, blown up like a drum, and when passing wind both up and down produces ease.

Next is **China** when the same feeling of bloating is not relieved by passing wind. People who gain the most from this remedy are great fantasists.

Lastly is **Lycopodium**. These people are often quite serious types and they classically experience problems in the late afternoon and early evening.

Hangovers

Nux vomica has been mentioned already as a useful medicine for overindulgence and comes in handy for hangovers. It is particularly indicated in a person if there is hypersensitivity, impatience, frustration over obstacles and when irritability is obvious to one and all.

Constipation

This refers to infrequent, difficult and sometimes painful evacuation of the bowels. In many ways it is a subjective complaint, since normal opening of the bowels varies from person to person,

some people going normally only once or twice a week, and others going normally three or four times a day. Sustained alteration of the bowel habit needs a medical opinion.

Alumina is an excellent remedy for very severe constipation in elderly people when the desire to open the bowels seems to have been lost. The individual may sit and strain and even feel impelled to use fingers to try to expel hard, knotty motions.

Petite, shy individuals who produce large hard motions when they do open their bowels may be helped by **Baryta carbonica**.

Bryonia is helpful for people who get constipated when they travel and who experience a burning sensation when they open their bowels in this constipated state.

Calcarea carbonica is useful in chubby people who paradoxically quite like the sensation of being constipated. They may lose the desire to open their bowels, but suffer no ill effects from it.

For children who get quite distressed when they strain to open their bowels, **Silica** is useful. Straining almost always produces a stinging sensation in the back passage.

Diarrhoea

Acute episodes of diarrhoea can leave the individual feeling quite drained and weak, as the result of electrolyte loss. Replacement of fluids and electrolytes is the mainstay of treatment, but the following remedies can nip an attack in the bud.

Arsenicum album is extremely useful in very neat, anxious, restless people. The diarrhoea produces a burning sensation around the anus, which may become quite red and inflamed. The motions are usually watery and offensive.

For cases which start in the early morning or just after midnight **China** is useful. The motions are watery with undigested residues present.

Sulphur is useful for people who are forced out of bed every morning, often at 5 or 6am, by a sudden desire to open the bowels. The motions are loose and extremely offensive.

Podophyllum also helps the sudden urge to open the bowels, especially when the diarrhoea is almost explosive. There is usually a lot of gurgling in the abdomen before the urge comes.

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