



## CAN WE HELP OUR DIGESTION?

Eating healthy whole foods can go a long way in improving the effectiveness of our digestive tract but there are also many other factors involved in healthy digestion. Here are some of the ways you can support your own digestion system to be healthy and strong.

**1. Eat your largest meal for breakfast or in middle of the day when your digestion is at its peak.** Our metabolism is at its fastest at this time and its the best time to eat cold foods like salads. We naturally produce more digestive enzymes at these times and have more stomach acid, both of which are crucial to digestion. Try and eat lighter and smaller meals in the evening.

**2. Drink plenty of water between meals.** This hydrates your stomach acid preparing it for the next meal. Quite often when we are hungry or just want a snack it is because we are dehydrated and our blood pressure starts to drop. It is very beneficial to drink a glass of water 30 minutes before eating your meal but no sooner as it may dilute your stomach acid too much. This acid is essential to breaking down our food as well as the absorption of many nutrients including iron.

**3. Practice gratitude.** Studies show that practicing gratitude for the food you are about to eat, can significantly improve digestion. Taking a few minutes to take some slow breaths and to smell and pay close attention to the food in front of us and how it may support us, helps our body become ready to digest at its best. When we engage the senses it triggers certain actions in the body. More digestive enzymes are released, bile and stomach acid is released and our nervous system relaxes, allowing for greater breakdown and absorption of nutrients from our food.

**4. Take a 10 minutes rest after eating.** This short action can greatly improve digestion by slowing the body down and keeping the Rest and Digest (para-sympathetic) nervous system relaxed, which is crucial to efficient digestion. When we eat on the run or when thinking about a thousand other things, the other nervous system is activated, the 'Fight or Flight' (sympathetic) pathway, which is activated when we are busy, stressed or worried. So, remember to take a breath, focus your mind on your food and take a rest afterwards.

**5. Take a short walk after eating.** This has been shown by research to be very beneficial to our digestion. The main reason is that it gives our metabolism a little boost, which is very helpful for our

digestive tract and is also relaxing for our nervous system. When walking, try to do it slow and gentle and use this time to breathe deep and relax.

Looking after the health of our digestive system is vital for our overall health and well-being, so make sure you take the time to choose nourishing foods and give yourself the space to relax and enjoy them.