

Digestive System Problems

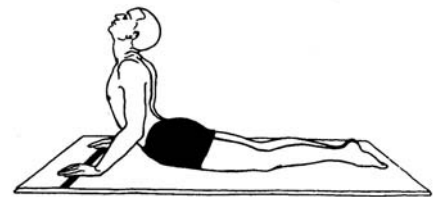
Information Sheet

Constipation

Constipation is the difficult or infrequent passage of hard and dry faeces and is caused by decreased action of the intestines.

⇒ **What to do:** Yogic postures and practices which help prevent and alleviate constipation are:

- Pashimottanasana
- Squatting (while going to toilet is excellent, it isn't appropriate to say to most people!)
- Half Shoulder Stand (Vipareeta Karani)
- Cobra
- Locust
- Salute to the sun
- Spinal twists
- Agnisara Kriya
- Paradoxical breathing



A very effective practice is massaging the abdomen in a clockwise circle first thing in the morning (before food).

Ensure you drink plenty of water and have enough fibre in your diet. Any form of regular exercise will be of benefit like: Yogic postures, walking and swimming.

Simplifying your diet helps, that is, avoid eating many different foods at once. Eating lighter meals speeds up the digestive process.

Taking the Ayurvedic herb 'Triphala' can be very effective for treating constipation – talk to your naturopath or see an ayurvedic practitioner.

It's a good idea to have a check up with your doctor so you know that it's nothing to be concerned about.

Diarrhoea

Acute diarrhoea (intense but short term) is a medical problem, usually caused by infection, food allergy or food poisoning and is best treated by a doctor. Chronic diarrhoea is not so much a disease, but a symptom of other diseases of the body such as bowel cancer, diverticulitis, ulcerative colitis, or more commonly it indicates an imbalance in the natural gut bacteria (flora) or presence of parasites.

⇒ **What to do:** include Acidophilus in the diet to maintain healthy gut flora. Drinking filtered water can prevent bad bacteria from entering the gut, and avoid re-heating and consuming foods containing meat.

Haemorrhoids

Haemorrhoids, more commonly known as piles, occur when the veins of the rectum become enlarged and inflamed. These veins are placed under pressure and become engorged with blood. Constipation and straining during defecation are possible causes of haemorrhoids. See section on what to do for constipation. Moolabhandha is an excellent practice for the prevention of haemorrhoids.

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

IBS, also known as spastic colon and sluggish bowel, is a disorder of the muscular wall of the bowel, which is responsible for pushing the contents of the bowel along to the rectum for elimination. It's like the bowel has forgotten what it is supposed to do, since often times IBS sufferers will experience alternating patterns of diarrhoea and constipation. Other symptoms are excessive gas, abdominal cramping and pain, mucus or blood in the stools, nausea, loss of appetite.

Treatment is highly desirable because IBS increases the chances of ulcerative colitis (inflammation of the mucosa of the large intestine) and bowel cancer.

IBS is thought to be psychological in origin, related to anxiety and fear.

- ⇒ **What to do:** sit in Vajrasana after eating, with awareness of the breath. Other practices include Shavasana with belly breathing, Alternate Nostril Breathing and Yoga Nidra.

Heartburn

Heartburn occurs when the sphincter in between the oesophagus and the stomach fails to close properly after food has entered the stomach. This means that hydrochloric acid from the stomach can irritate the oesophageal wall and cause a burning sensation in the region near the heart – which is why it is called heartburn (it is not related to any cardiac problem).

Peptic Ulcers can form if the inflammation continues. These ulcers get their name from the pepsin or hydrochloric acid that forms them in the stomach wall. Smoking, alcohol, coffee, and stress are precursors to ulcer formation.

- ⇒ **What to do:** it may help to eat smaller servings of food and keep the body upright after eating (sit in Vajrasana). Anti acids are often prescribed, though treat the symptom, not the cause. Avoiding irritants to the stomach can help, and practicing relaxation techniques like belly breathing to alleviate stress.

