

Digestion

One of -- if Not the Most -- Important Bodily Functions for Health and Vitality



Digestion is how we receive and process the nutrients that our bodies and minds need to function and be well.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine says it perfectly:

“Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food.”

Aging can change how we digest food and absorb nutrients:

- The amount and quality of digestive juices in our bodies declines
- Digestive processes slow down
- The muscles in the digestive tract weaken
- Medications taken can affect digestion

These changes, along with an unbalanced diet and lifestyle, can contribute to different gastrointestinal issues such as **indigestion, acid reflux, gas, chronic constipation, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, and hemorrhoids.**

A holistic approach to self-care and keeping digestive fires stoked should include:

- a good diet of natural, organic whole foods
- herbs and other digestive aids
- Good mealtime practices and a healthy lifestyle

At Healing Leaves, we feel that herbs are a fantastic way to enhance digestion and we have seen them improve the health of our clients. You probably don't have to look far for digestive herbs – spices and herbs that you have in your kitchen cabinet are excellent digestive aids and have been used this way for thousands of years. Flip this page to see a few of our favorites that make great herbal teas!

Favorite Digestive Herbs

German Chamomile | Fennel | Ginger | Peppermint

Here are some benefits common to all four of these lovely herbs – enjoy them in a tea before or after meals to support the digestive processes:

- They are considered **carminatives**, so they aid in digestion by increasing the secretion of digestive juices and reducing sluggishness, while reducing or eliminating gasses and bloating.
- They have **anti-spasmodic** qualities, so they are great at relaxing the muscles of the digestive tract and reducing or eliminating spasms and intestinal cramping.
- They taste great!

Each has additional properties that make them excellent digestive aids:



German Chamomile –one of the most widely used herbs in teas. It is **anti-inflammatory** so it soothes an irritated digestive tract. Also a **relaxing nervine**, it works to relax the nervous system so it is great to calm a nervous or jittery stomach. Please note that people with allergies or sensitivities to plants such as daisies, marigolds, or ragweed should avoid this herb as it is in the same family as these other plants.

Fennel – It is a culinary herb used in cooking and may already be in your spice cabinet! You can use the plant's bulb or the seeds to flavor dishes with its slightly licorice-like flavor and reap its digestive benefits. Like Chamomile, it is considered an **anti-inflammatory** herb and is also useful in loosening mucus in the upper respiratory tract that may be affecting swallowing food.



Ginger – One of my go-to herbs for an unhappy stomach and nausea, Ginger excels at quickly squashing general indigestion and eliminating nausea associated with digestion, motion sickness, and morning sickness. It is very warming to the body and is a **circulatory stimulant**, so it is great for waking up the digestive tract. Keeping candied ginger handy is a quick and tasty way reap Ginger's benefits. Check with your physician if you take blood thinners before consuming large quantities of ginger.

Peppermint – It is similar to Ginger in its ability to reduce indigestion and that “acidy” feeling and is considered one of nature’s great antacids. Mixing it with a mucilaginous or “slimy” herb like Slippery Elm quiets and coats the stomach and protects the mucus lining. It is also widely used to reduce nausea, and can also be used to reduce Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) symptoms. It is also a wonderful aromatherapy herb – just smelling the essential oil can help calm and prepare the digestive system to do its job!



A healthy digestive tract and overall wellness don't have to be expensive or time consuming to obtain and maintain. Let Healing Leaves help you develop a strategy to support and improve your health through an individualized, holistic approach.



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