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Benefits News

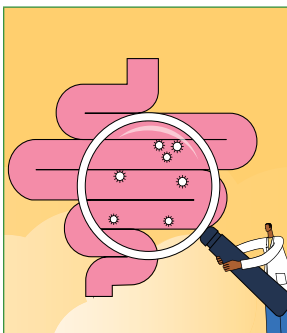


Top Tips to Support Digestive Health

This document is part of the OEGB June Newsletter, Digestive Health. To access other resources, visit the [News and Events page](#).

A staggering 40% of Americans' daily lives are disrupted by digestive troubles. If you're one of the many who struggle with digestive issues, there are things you can do right now to help improve your digestion.

Issues like heartburn, gas, bloating, and constipation generally reflect what's happening throughout your body. Some of the ways you can protect your digestive system may sound surprising because they're not just related to your diet.



What's the Deal with Colonoscopies?

With the rise in colon cancer diagnoses, colonoscopies are among the most important screenings you can get. They may be recommended for everyone starting at age 45. They may also be recommended at a younger age or more often. This depends on whether you have a family history of colon cancer.

Feeling squeamish about a colonoscopy or can't find the time? Ask your provider about an at-home screening test, like Cologuard®. These types of screenings are effective and covered by OEGB plans at 100% when preventive. Traditional colonoscopies are also fully covered by OEGB plans. While these tests are convenient, there are downsides. If a test comes back positive, you will still need a follow-up colonoscopy for confirmation. The tests aren't as accurate as a colonoscopy. Also, the at-home tests can detect the presence of cancer in your colon, but they can't detect or remove polyps. (These can lead to cancer.)

Here are some quick tips to help support your digestive health:



Eat more fiber. The recommended fiber intake for adults is 20-35 grams per day. However, the average American's daily fiber intake is only 10-15 grams. A balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables provides the right amount of fiber. This helps to build good bacteria, improve gut health, and keeps your digestive tract moving.



Get more sleep. Adequate sleep duration and quality promote a healthy gut microbiome and help build a good foundation for your digestive health. Try to get between 7 and 9 hours per night of steady sleep. If you don't sleep well, it can increase stress and lead to inflammation.



Move more. Exercise can contribute to your microbiome diversity, improve your digestion, and strengthen your gut lining. Physical activity can also boost your immune system, which can protect your digestive system from harmful bacteria and inflammation.



Take colonoscopies seriously. Colorectal cancer screenings, or colonoscopies, are recommended for everyone starting at age 45. This screening identifies precancerous or cancerous colon polyps. It can also detect serious digestive conditions like inflammatory bowel disease and diverticulitis. If you're age 45 or older, it's recommended that you have a colonoscopy at least every 10 years. Ask your provider to refer you for this preventive test. If you're testing for preventive purposes, your medical plan pays 100% of the cost, so it will cost you nothing out of pocket.





Check whether if an endoscopy makes sense. For chronic digestive issues, like heartburn and acid reflux, an endoscopy can be a helpful test. While you're under anesthesia, your provider places a long thin tube through your mouth and weaves it to your stomach or other organs. Along the path, the provider can take pictures of your digestive tract, take tissue samples, and perform surgery, if needed.



Manage stress. Reducing stress is fundamental to reduce common symptoms of digestive issues, like heartburn. There's no magic diet that works. Try relaxation therapies along with other distraction techniques.



Get help for issues like anxiety and depression. Mood and digestive system health (especially disorders like irritable bowel syndrome) are closely linked via the [brain-gut connection](#).

Sources:

[Johns Hopkins Medicine | Your Digestive System: 5 Ways to Support Gut Health](#)

[American College of Gastroenterology | Digestive Health Tips](#)

[Cleveland Clinic | Endoscopy](#)

[Cleveland Clinic | How Exercise Can Lead to a Healthy Gut](#)

[Gastroenterology and Hepatology: The Independent Peer-Reviewed Journal | Sleep Dysfunction and Gastrointestinal Diseases](#)

