

Tummy Troubles? Feel Well By Eating Well

(NAPSA)—Some health problems affect only the young. Other problems concern mostly adults, but when it comes to having intestinal trouble, just about anyone can feel the pain. Intestinal troubles run the gambit from the garden-variety cases of diarrhea, constipation, heartburn or gas to the more worrisome problems, such as irritable bowel syndrome, diverticulitis and ulcers. The good news, almost all “tummy troubles” are manageable and some may even be preventable.

“Lifestyle habits are key to a happy intestine,” says Leslie Bonci, a registered dietitian and author of the new book *The American Dietetic Association’s Guide to Better Digestion*. “What you eat, how you eat and how you handle stress are three of the most influential factors affecting digestion and intestinal health.” To prevent problems, Bonci counsels people on what she calls “gut survival skills.”

Whole grains do wonders—Like every other part of your body, your digestive tract benefits from a well-balanced diet. Protein is necessary for the growth of new cells in the intestine and the repair of damaged ones; certain vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients help keep cells healthy and may actually protect against cancer; and fiber from whole-grain breads and cereals, legumes, fruits and vegetables acts as a sweeper, clearing out the intestine and moving potentially harmful substances through the digestive tract.

Stop the chomping brigade—According to Bonci that means no gobbling or gulping. “People have lost touch with what a real meal is. We eat more than we should, we eat when we’re upset and we eat while we are doing other

things. The stomach and intestines aren’t getting much time to relax so often foods don’t move through all that easily.” Meals should be purposeful and people should take time to savor them. Eating small bites, chewing thoroughly and sipping beverages helps make digestion easier as does evenly spaced meals and snacks throughout the day.

Manage stress—Stress can wreak havoc on the digestive system. Researchers believe part of the problem may be that stress causes inflammation of intestinal cells. Inflammation can cause changes in nerve and muscle tissue, which results in discomfort and dysfunction.

There is nothing to lose and much to be gained by relieving stress, says Bonci. Exercise and relaxation techniques such as reading, a massage or yoga can help ease the pressures of life. Bonci advises taking time to enjoy meals then scheduling a little downtime right after eating.

A Great Start Toward Total Nutrition—Drink plenty of fluids. Besides whole-grains and other fiber-rich foods, fluids help move foods through the intestinal tract. Water, milk, juice and decaffeinated beverages count—while fruits and vegetables will also contribute to the fluids you need.

How much should you drink?

Use the following equations to find out.

- Body weight (pounds) x 0.5 = Number of ounces of fluid if you do not exercise regularly.
- Body weight (pounds) x 0.7 = Number of ounces of fluid if you do exercise regularly.

SOURCE: The American Dietetic Association’s *Guide to Better Digestion*, John Wiley & Sons, 2003

