

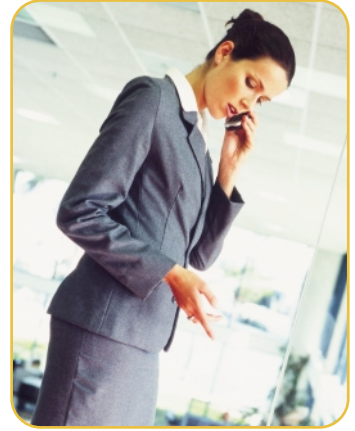
DIGESTIVE
FITNESS
INFORMATION
BUREAU



> lifestyle

LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle is key to our health. In today's hectic world of deadlines and stress, it is hard to focus on getting a balanced diet and regular exercise. But without a close look at our lifestyle and determining ways of leading a healthier life our bodies will soon feel the effects.



Our digestive system is extremely intricate and complicated. Like most living things it can respond well to being treated with understanding, care and respect. If we do not respect our bodies, things can go wrong and we may require some additional help to bounce back to peak fitness. The life we lead has a huge impact on our bodies, so lifestyle changes can help us improve and maintain our overall digestive fitness.

Routine

The 24-hour society that we now live in means that our hectic lifestyles can get in the way of our health. There just does not seem to be enough time in the day to get everything done. Unfortunately this means that we don't have time to concentrate on our diet, exercise or lifestyle – all of which should be in a set routine for our optimum health.

Our bowels respond well to routine, so eating meals at about the same time each day will help keep our bowels regular. Skipping meals on a regular basis means that our bowels function irregularly – this does not promote good digestive health.

Exercise

Our digestive tract is ringed with muscles that contract to help move food through. General exercise acts indirectly on the gut to stimulate peristalsis, the process by which food is moved through the digestive system by involuntary contraction of gut muscles. If you are not taking regular exercise and have a relatively sedentary job, then your bowel may become sluggish.

Even if you do not take regular exercise at the gym, there are still changes you can make in your day-to-day routines that can increase your general level of activity:

Tips for improving a sedentary lifestyle:

- Walk up the stairs where possible rather than taking the lift.
- At work, try to take even a short walk at lunchtime – this does not need to be a power walk! Just a brisk walk around the block for 10 minutes will help digestion.
- Rather than picking up the phone to talk to a colleague, walk to their desk.
- If at home, walk up and down the stairs 5 – 10 times each day to help keep all muscles active.
- Walk to the shops rather than taking the car.

Medication

Some commonly used medicines are known to cause constipation, particularly certain painkillers (e.g. codeine), iron tablets and some antacids (e.g. aluminium hydroxide). If you are concerned that the medication you are taking is having a severe impact on your bowel health, then ask your local Pharmacist for advice or visit your GP.



Be kind to yourself

Some digestive disorders such as constipation may be brought on by, or made worse by stress. Finding a leisure activity that focuses on breathing, body control and relaxation will help you to de-stress. Most gyms now offer classes in yoga, pilates and stretching; your local paper or library should be able to point you in the right direction.

If you don't have time to do any of the above, there are still things you can do to help relieve stress:

Top tips for de-stressing

- When you feel yourself becoming stressed, stop what you are doing and take six deep breaths in and out. Not only will this help slow your heart rate, but will also help relax any tense muscles in the body.
- Try and think about something different for a couple of minutes. This will help you to re-focus on the task in hand.
- Talk things through with a colleague or friend – a problem shared can be a problem halved.

Plan ahead

- Our gastro-colic responses mean that our bowels start to 'move' following a meal e.g. for most people, half an hour after breakfast is the most likely time for their bowels to 'move'. This is no good if you are travelling or do not have access to a toilet, so plan to be near a toilet following meal times.
- Allow time for bowel actions: do not rush or try to strain.
- When you need to pass a motion, try to use a toilet where you have privacy and are unlikely to be disturbed so that you are not inhibited.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on digestive health is available by calling the Digestive Fitness Information Bureau on 020 7761 1796 or by visiting www.constipationadvice.co.uk

Alternatively for further information on Senokot or Fybogel you can call the Medical Information Unit at Reckitt Benckiser on 0500 455 456.

