

The Colon
Extremely Modified from Ron Kennedy, MD by PBMD

With your car, you can rely on a mechanic to perform maintenance. With your body, you do it your self or it goes undone. A thorough knowledge of the entire digestive tract is necessary to allow you to perform needed maintenance procedures for your digestive system. It is important to understand the three basic areas of digestion: the stomach, the small intestine and the large intestine.

Please consult an encyclopedia for a diagram of the digestive tract. Locate the structures on the diagram mentioned in this discussion.

The stomach and small intestine together are called the "upper intestine," or "upper GI." The colon and rectum are known as the "lower intestine," or "lower GI." In the stomach, a load of hydrochloric acid and pepsin is dumped on your food, and with churning it transforms into "chyme." After two hours of this kind of harsh treatment, chyme is moved into the small intestine where it is acted on by bile from the liver and digestive enzymes and sodium bicarbonate from the pancreas. Bile breaks down fat into fatty acids, so that lipases, the enzymes for fat from the pancreas, can break down the fatty acids. Proteinases break down proteins. Amylase breaks down carbohydrates and is secreted both in the small intestine and in the mouth.

Between hydrochloric acid, pepsin, amylase, lipases and proteinases, the upper digestive tract breaks down the food you eat. When food has reached the end of the small intestine and is prepared to be pushed into the large intestine by peristalsis, a waving rhythmic contracture of the intestines, almost all of the nutrients have been extracted and absorbed.

The best way to take care of your upper intestine is to eat a lot of high-fiber foods, which we will discuss later. The upper intestine is easy to take care of, just eat clean natural foods and make sure you have plenty of stomach acid and enzymes.

The colon is another matter. The entire digestive tract is, on average, 28 feet long. The last five of these 28 feet is the colon. The colon is the toxic waste dump of the body, and most people take care of it by ignoring it and pretending that it does not exist. We treat the body in a parallel fashion to the way we have treated waste disposal in society.

It is no secret that the world is an increasingly more toxic place in which to live. This began with the industrial revolution. We breath toxins, they contact our skin, we drink them, and we eat them. Pollutants are everywhere, beginning with our drinking water, which is treated with heavy doses of chlorine to kill the bacteria. If chlorine kills bacteria, by the way, how do you suppose it treats the cells of your body, or the living friendly bacteria in your bowel? The only solution to this problem is to drink water from sources you trust or steam distilled water, preferably that which you distill yourself.

Where food is concerned, the typical western diet is grown on nutritionally deficient soil loaded with pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, heavy metals and usually treated with artificial salt based fertilizer. Further more the food has added artificial colorants, flavoring, preservatives, and chemicals to enhance stability and taste. The usual human diet has been altered drastically in the last seven or eight generations. The best solution here is to eat only fresh, organically grown foods from a source you know and trust or grow yourself.

How likely is it, however, that you will be able to drink only steam distilled water and eat only fresh, organically grown foods of plant origin? If you are able to stay at home all day and grow your own food? Maybe you can. Maybe you should if you are interested in maintaining or regaining your health.

The situation described here leads us to a discussion of the colon, because it is the colon which must finally encounter all these toxins, and the usual result is an overwhelmed colon. The colon is not immune to all these toxins. The result is a sick colon, which, like any sick organ, slows down and retains these waste products longer than it otherwise would.

"Transit time" is the time it takes a meal to travel from the dinner table to elimination from the colon. A healthy transit time is twelve to eighteen hours. However, the usual transit time in western countries is 65-100 hours! Putrefaction happens when that which has been rejected for digestion by your body is broken down by bacteria. Bacteria extract the last possible food value from the contents of the colon, and the waste products from that process are reabsorbed back into the body. This is called "auto-intoxication" or "self-poisoning." Transit time can be measured by eating fresh cooked corn and watching your stool for evidence of the corn.

If you handle your body any other way than by eating only fresh, organically grown foods with plenty of pure water (half your body weight in ounces), you suffer from some degree of dehydration and auto-intoxication. Even if you do treat your body to fresh, organically grown foods, and you are older than 21 years, your colon slows with age, and you also experience some degree of auto-intoxication. The point here is that your colon is probably sick right now, to some degree, whether or not you know it.

The most common symptom of auto-intoxication is mental dullness and fatigue. Other common symptoms are headache, constipation, diarrhea, colds, general aches and pains, particularly up and down the spine and especially in the low back, skin problems, common infections (due to lowered immuno-competence), morning sluggishness, gas, bad breath, foul-smelling stool, allergies, intolerance to fatty foods, premenstrual tension, breast soreness and tendency to have repeated vaginal infections.

The big problem with becoming responsible for your colon is that no one wants to. Nevertheless, if you are to be fully responsible for your body this issue must be addressed. If you are not willing to manage your colon and keep it in tune for the rest of your life, I assure you that you will pay a high price, much higher than any inconvenience you may experience now.

That said, what is to be done? There are two qualities you want to have in your colon. You want it to be (1) clean from pathogenic bacteria, fungi and protozoan parasites and (2) be function for its intended purpose - extracting nutrition from your food and removing wastes.

There is a big fad promoted by colon therapists and unthinking physicians that the colon must be kept clean. They cite the reason to have a constantly clean colon prevents pain, discomfort, swelling, gas, constipation and a big belly! This is absurd as these conditions are most likely caused by pathogens disrupting normal bowel physiology. Furthermore, I prescribe very expensive probiotics that work effectively to put the proper bacteria in the proper regions of the intestinal tract, why would I want the patient to wash them out? If you do not use this specialized delivery system you are wasting time and money. Besides, most probiotics actually contain bacteria that produce hydrogen peroxide that kill or compete with species in the same capsule! I also add a friendly yeast to the mixture. The only use for a colon therapist is to remove fecoliths from extremely constipated patients. A healthy colon is a functional colon.

There are, however, times I do recommend an enema that can be done at home particularly in an extremely alkaline patient (parasympathetic) and I have ruled out pancreatic cancer. I also recommend Chiropractic care for these highly alkaline individuals while we work to get their parasympathetic dominance back to normal.