

# GASTROENTEROLOGY

Department of the  
CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS



## Gastrectomy:

*Nutritional Advice*

## HOW DOES THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM WORK?

The digestive system is composed of a series of hollow organs that form a tube from the mouth to the anus.

Every section of the digestive system has a specific, important function in food absorption and digestion.

The **esophagus** helps to transport food from the mouth to the stomach.

The **stomach** accumulates food, digests (breaks) it into small molecules, and controls its passage into the **small intestine** for further absorption.

The **pancreas** and liver secrete substances that facilitate food absorption in the small intestine.

The final segment of the digestive system is the **colon (large intestine)**. Its primary function is to absorb water and undigested foods as well to evacuate the waste products of digestion.

**Stomach**

**Colon**  
(large intestine)

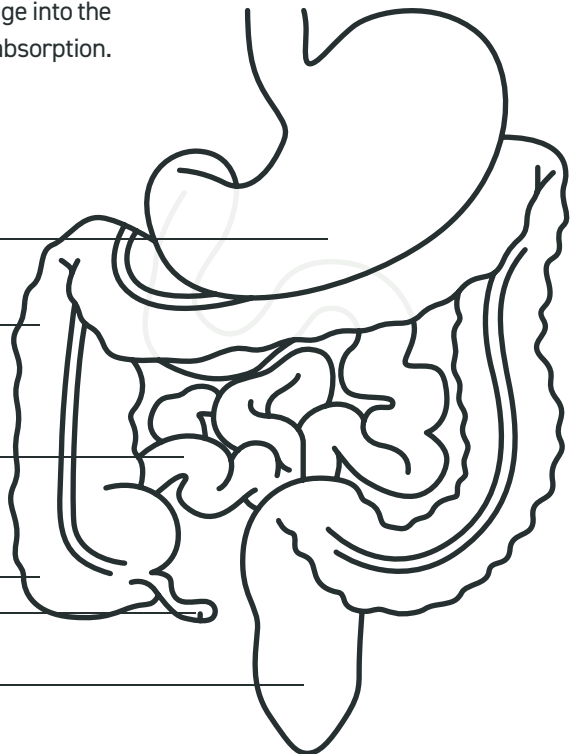
**Small bowel**

**Cecum**

**Appendix**

**Rectum**

**Anus**



## WHAT IS GASTRECTOMY?

Gastrectomy is the surgical removal of the stomach (total gastrectomy) or partial removal of the stomach (partial gastrectomy). This type of surgery is usually performed to treat stomach cancer or for recurring ulcers. Gastrectomy can also be associated with treatment of obesity (bariatric surgery).



## WHAT ARE THE NUTRITIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING A GASTRECTOMY?

Side effects that vary from person to person may occur after a gastrectomy. Here are common outcomes of gastrectomy as well as advice to help you feel better.

### Rapid satiation

To avoid rapidly feeling full (stuffed) when eating, try the following:

- Eat more, smaller meals (four to six daily).
- Have a few light snacks between meals to get the calories you need during the day.
- Drink 30 minutes before and after meals, not during meals.
- Eat slowly and chew well.

If you still have a section of your stomach, you might suffer from gastroparesis (aka delayed gastric emptying). To learn more, read the gastroparesis folder.

## Diarrhea

Drink plenty of liquids between meals to prevent dehydration.

To prevent diarrhea:

- Consume fibre such as Metamucil®.
- Eat foods such as white rice, pasta, and bananas.
- Limit your intake of fried or fatty foods.
- Avoid candy and soft drinks.

If diarrhea occurs 15 to 60 minutes after meals, it might be early dumping syndrome, which is secondary to the overwhelmingly rapid uptake of certain foods (especially sugars) in the small intestine. Other symptoms that might occur after eating include: nausea, vomiting, cramps, and abdominal pain. If you suffer from early dumping syndrome, try the following:

- Eat more, smaller meals (four to six daily).
- Drink 30 minutes before and after meals, not during meals.
- Avoid stimulants such as coffee, tea, and alcohol.
- Avoid monosaccharides (simple sugars) (e.g., candy, soft drinks, fruit juice, etc.).
- Eat and drink slowly, and chew well.
- Eat while seated or left semi-seated position.

To learn more, read the dumping syndrome folder.

You might also have bulky, sticky stools known as steatorrhea. Steatorrhea is the result of fat malabsorption arising from a problem in combining food and pancreatic enzymes. Your physician can prescribe pancreatic enzyme supplements.



## Heartburn and gastroesophageal reflux

To prevent heartburn and gastroesophageal reflux:

- Eat more, smaller meals (four to six daily).
- Avoid spicy, acidic or irritating foods (e.g., curry, fruit juice, soft drinks).
- Avoid overconsumption of tea, coffee, or alcohol.
- Avoid eating late at night.
- Avoid lying down or going to bed after meals.
- Drink after meals.
- Sleep with your head raised 30 degrees.

## Vomiting of bile

The vomiting of bile often occurs in the morning upon awakening. To prevent vomiting, eat smaller meals more often and avoid eating at night before going to bed. Your physician can recommend medications to alleviate nausea and vomiting.



## Anemia

When your stomach is removed, your body is no longer able to absorb vitamin B12 and it becomes more difficult to absorb iron. Your physician can prescribe iron and vitamin B12 supplements.

It is also recommended that you:

- Eat foods that are rich in iron such as:
  - Red meat
  - Liver
  - Iron-enriched cereal (e.g., Pabulum®)
- Accompany iron-rich foods with foods rich in vitamin C such as:
  - Certain citrus fruits
  - Fruit juice (orange, apple)
  - Berries
  - Tomatoes

## Weight loss

To prevent significant weight loss:

- Eat a few snacks between meals (e.g., cheese, dried fruit, yogurt).
- Drink nourishing beverages such as shakes (milkshakes or smoothies), or Ensure® or Boost® beverages.

You may need to be tube fed (gavage or enteral feeding) if you are not able to meet your nutritional needs through standard methods. Your physician will then refer you to a nutritionist.



**If you have any questions or concerns, speak to your nurse or physician.**

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**Revision of content:**

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**Linguistic revision and layout:**

Service des communications

Direction des ressources humaines, des communications et  
des affaires juridiques

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Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, 2021

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universitaire de santé  
et de services sociaux  
de l'Estrie – Centre  
hospitalier universitaire  
de Sherbrooke

Québec 

February 2021

4-6-10650

santeestrie.qc.ca