

## The Digestive System

By Sharon Fabian



1 The digestive system is the group of organs that breaks down food so that the body can use it. Food must be broken down all the way to its individual molecules to be useable. This involves a number of steps, and different organs to do different parts of the job.

2 Once food is broken down it provides energy for many essential body functions. It provides the energy for all of our physical activity such as walking, playing sports, working, and talking. It also provides the energy for other, more automatic, activities including breathing and thinking. Food provides the energy for the nerves, muscles, and organs, including the heart, to continue working. It provides the fuel to build and repair body tissues. Food energy is needed to regulate body organs and systems. It is the fuel that provides heat to keep our body temperature at a steady 98.6 degrees.

3 The digestive process begins in the mouth. There, the teeth and the muscles of the mouth begin the digestive process by breaking down the food into smaller bits. Saliva, produced by the salivary glands, begins to digest the food before it is even swallowed. Saliva and the other chemicals produced along the way to speed the digestive process are called digestive enzymes.

4 Next, muscles in the throat help swallow the food, and it passes through a long tube called the esophagus. The esophagus goes from the throat to the stomach. In the stomach, a digestive fluid called gastric juice mixes with the food. The stomach muscles toss the food and the gastric juices, and break down the protein parts of the food. Other parts of the food will not be broken down for several more hours.

5 The food is now a thick liquid, and it leaves the stomach to pass into the small intestine. In the small intestine more digestive enzymes act on the food. Pancreatic juice, from the pancreas, and bile, produced in the liver and stored in the gall bladder, continue to break down various parts of the food. They complete the digestion of starches, sugars, and fats.

6 As the food becomes completely digested it gets absorbed into the bloodstream by tiny blood vessels in the wall of the small intestine. At this point the food has been broken down to its molecules, and the energy from the food travels to wherever it is needed in the body, by way of the bloodstream.

7 The parts of the food that cannot be digested then pass into the large intestine. These parts include fibers, or roughage. There they are stored and broken down further by the action of bacteria, until they are expelled from the body through the rectum.

8 The whole system that the food passes through is called the alimentary canal. Its main parts are the mouth, the esophagus, the stomach, the liver, the gall bladder, the pancreas, the small intestine, the large intestine, and the rectum. Some of its main chemicals are saliva, gastric juice, pancreatic juice, and bile. It's the system that provides the energy that keeps us alive and active -- the digestive system.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Which is part of the digestive system? <input type="radio"/> A Lungs <input type="radio"/> B Brain <input type="radio"/> C Liver <input type="radio"/> D Aorta	2. The digestive system is _____. <input type="radio"/> A An organ <input type="radio"/> B The system that we use to breathe <input type="radio"/> C The same thing as the stomach <input type="radio"/> D A group of organs
3. The digestive system produces which of these chemicals? <input type="radio"/> A Gastric juice <input type="radio"/> B Saliva <input type="radio"/> C Pancreatic juice <input type="radio"/> D All of the above	4. This article is mainly about _____. <input type="radio"/> A The mouth <input type="radio"/> B The small intestine <input type="radio"/> C The system that breaks down food <input type="radio"/> D The system that circulates our blood
5. Food provides _____. <input type="radio"/> A Energy <input type="radio"/> B Blood <input type="radio"/> C Oxygen <input type="radio"/> D None of the above	6. Food must be broken down into _____ before it can pass into the bloodstream. <input type="radio"/> A Liquid <input type="radio"/> B Atoms <input type="radio"/> C Proteins <input type="radio"/> D Molecules
7. The esophagus is _____. <input type="radio"/> A The organ that digests protein <input type="radio"/> B The organ that produces bile <input type="radio"/> C Another name for the stomach <input type="radio"/> D The tube from the mouth to the stomach	8. Digestive enzymes are _____. <input type="radio"/> A Foods <input type="radio"/> B Organs <input type="radio"/> C Chemicals <input type="radio"/> D Muscles