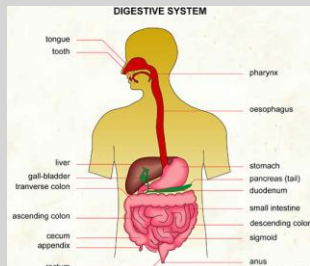


Are you always feeling sluggish after a meal or find that you're constantly suffering with constipation? Your digestive system may be affected by a condition called slow transit.



Your gastro-intestinal tract is a network of muscles that contract and relax to continually push food along the system. Different nerves tell different muscles to contract at varying speeds, for example the muscles in your oesophagus as you swallow work a lot faster than in your small bowel. Modifying digestion rates is actually really important to ensure you have adequate time to eat, digest your food, absorb all the nutrients you need and eventually eliminate wastes. The time taken for your digestive system to do all of this is called 'transit time'.

Did you know it normally takes about 2 days for digestion to complete? From the time you eat it to the time you excrete it

Unfortunately, when there is a break in signalling from your brain, nerves or digestive muscles, this normal muscle movement slows down. This can dramatically slow down transit and prolong the time needed to complete the digestion process.

What are the side-effects?

If you suffer from slow transit, you may experience symptoms such as heartburn, nausea or vomiting, feeling full after only a few bites of food, variable blood glucose levels, lack of appetite, spasms in the stomach area or malnutrition. If food lingers in the stomach too long, it can also cause a bacterial overgrowth from the fermentation of food, which can result in nausea and bloating.

As slow transit causes delayed movement along the digestive tract, chronic constipation is also a common complication. The large bowel is responsible for re-absorbing water and if your bowels take more time to empty, it allows for excessive amounts of water to be re-absorbed causing your stools to become too dry and difficult to pass.

Tips to prevent constipation

There are various strategies to assist you with digestion and help manage your symptoms including:

- avoid eating large meals. Instead aim to eat about 4 to 6 small, meals and snacks frequently throughout the day,
- ensure you're drinking sufficient amounts of water, and
- eat slowly – take 30 minutes per meal. Chew your food very well and take time between each mouthful. Eating quickly will put a large load of food in your stomach and will increase time it stays in the stomach for digestion.



Monitor your blood glucose levels as they can become unpredictable with prolonged transit time



Standing up or walking after eating can improve transit time as gravity can help digestion

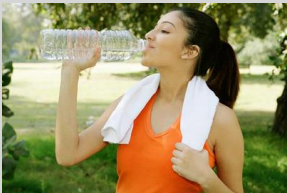
There are two types of fibre: soluble (which absorbs fluid) and insoluble (which doesn't absorb fluid). The amount and type of fibre that you require depends on the cause of your problems, so remember to speak to your Dietitian about your individual requirements.

In extreme cases, it may be necessary to try a liquid based diet. This is best managed under the supervision of an experienced Dietitian to ensure you're still meeting your nutritional requirements. Introduction of more liquid based options could include soups, smoothies, milkshakes, drinking yoghurt, yoghurt, custard or meal replacement shakes. In some severe cases where there is negligible bowel movement, liquid based High Energy High Protein (HEHP) nutritional supplements options will be needed to replace solid meals.

Where to get help

Sometimes small dietary or lifestyle modifications can make the world of difference to how you look at food and can restore the enjoyment of eating again. If your digestion is slower than what it should be, it will be a good idea for you to make a review appointment with your Dietitian to assess your diet and symptoms.

For more information about dietary strategies, information about managing slow transit or to make an appointment with an experienced Dietitian, call us on 1300 438 550 or visit www.melaniemcgrice.com.au



Talk to your Dietitian about calculating your fluid requirements to prevent dehydration and manage constipation