
Nature's Blast
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The 5 STEP PLAN For
GREAT DIGESTION

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by

Nature's Blast

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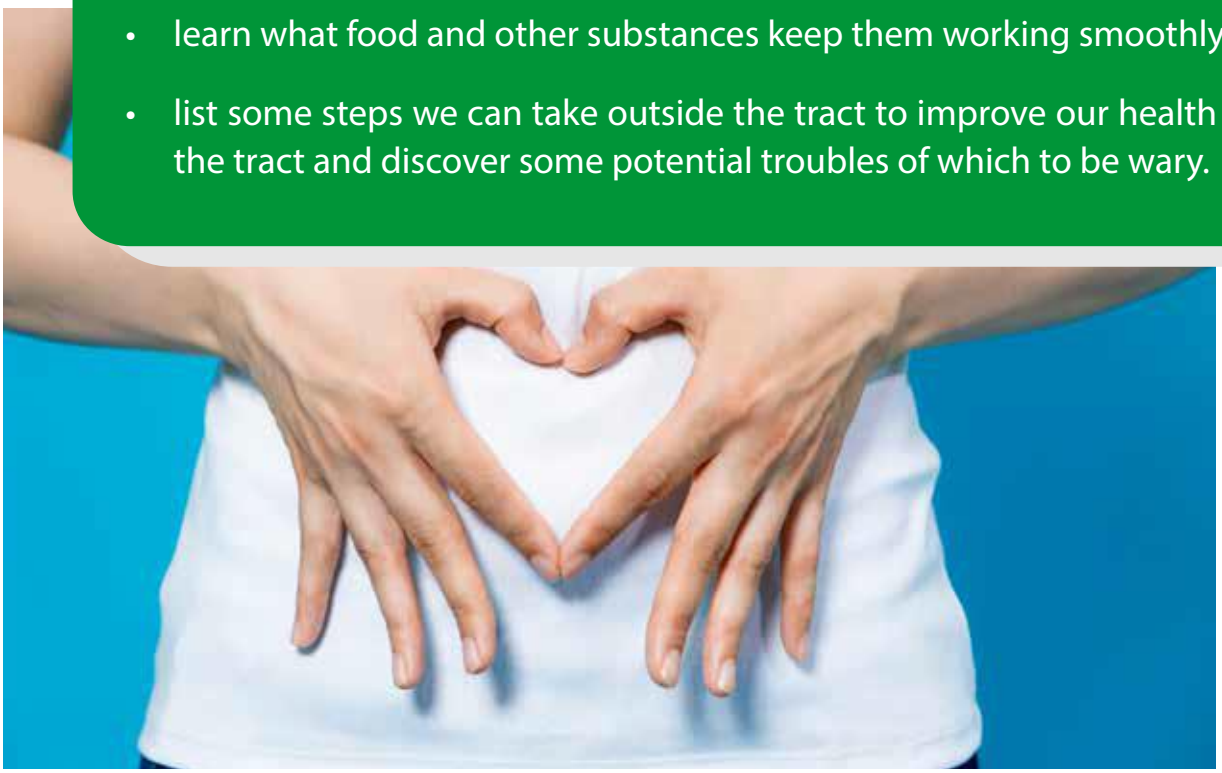
INTRODUCTION

We've all had that experience. Perhaps it was late in the evening as you were getting ready for bed and realized you could never go to sleep with that burning sensation in your stomach. Or maybe, as you sat up at the breakfast table, you were suddenly overwhelmed with a feeling of nausea and had to excuse yourself. Perhaps you became aware one afternoon that your clothes had suddenly grown extremely tight and, as you sought a way to loosen them, you realized you had become uncomfortably bloated.

Our digestive system is one aspect of our physical well-being we continually take for granted. Soon enough you discover that we ignore or abuse our gastrointestinal tract at our peril. When the GI tract gets out of balance, we often try to remedy it with thoughtless, simple cures: a glass of milk to calm a restless stomach or an antacid tablet to mitigate the heartburn we're experiencing.

To enjoy good digestive health, it's important to realize that several organs are simultaneously at work to convert the food we eat to nutritional basics we need to thrive. Indeed, we should view our GI tract as a team. As with any team, success means each member needs to be healthy and function at peak performance. In this bonus book:

- we'll walk through five distinct steps that will help us get to know the members of our digestive team,
- find out the things that keep them from functioning properly,
- learn what food and other substances keep them working smoothly,
- list some steps we can take outside the tract to improve our health within the tract and discover some potential troubles of which to be wary.



STEP 1

Know the Players on Your Digestive Team

We just finished lunch and polished it off with a chocolate tart that just hit the spot. We washed it down with a little drink of water or tea and promptly forgot about it. What didn't occur to us—unless we have a digestive problem—is that simple meal actually set into motion a complex series of processes that involve multiple, interdependent organs. Unheralded and largely ignored, the players on your digestive team are ready to be acknowledged.

YOUR MOUTH

It all starts here with every bite you take. The mouth isn't just a point of entry, however. As food enters, it's saturated with saliva from glands in the mouth. If the food had a delicious aroma, your saliva glands didn't wait for the plate. They began to secrete right away. The chemical makeup of the saliva begins to break down your food and make it more digestible before it makes it passes your tonsils.

> "As food enters, it's saturated with saliva from glands in the mouth."

YOUR ESOPHAGUS

"Esophagus is ringed with muscles that contract to push the food you've eaten toward your stomach."

Your throat ends at the junction of two tubes. One is your trachea that remains open most of the time so air can move to and from your lungs. The other tube is your esophagus, which is covered by a flap of tissue called the epiglottis that opens and closes to prevent food and drink from going into your lungs. More than just a simple tube, the esophagus is ringed with muscles that contract to push the food you've eaten toward your stomach.

You have heard the term "sphincter" regarding your GI tract, to be sure. There are multiple sphincters in your digestive system. One, the lower esophageal sphincter, must relax to allow food to enter your stomach. This muscle also prevents food and digestive acid from moving back up into your throat.

YOUR STOMACH

The stomach is really an empty container that hangs onto what you've eaten while the enzymes present in your stomach break the food down into its component parts. The enzymes, along with powerful acid, are secreted by cells in the lining of your stomach.

YOUR SMALL INTESTINE

After leaving your stomach, your food enters your small intestine, another muscular tube that's usually over 20 feet long. The small intestine is made of three different sections. First is the duodenum, which continues breaking down food that has left the stomach. As nutrients leave the duodenum, they enter first the jejunum, then the ileum. As food moves along, it morphs into a liquid state and the small intestine absorbs nutrients into your bloodstream. Next, your former sandwich moves into the large intestine.

> "As food moves along, it morphs into a liquid state and the small intestine absorbs nutrients into your bloodstream."

YOUR PANCREAS

This organ demonstrates clearly that it doesn't have to be within the GI tract to have a powerful influence over its operation. Your pancreas is a little chemical factory that secretes enzymes into the small intestine. These enzymes break down passing foodstuff into its basic food groups: fats, proteins, and carbohydrates. Importantly, the pancreas is also the organ that secretes insulin. Without this chemical, our bodies cannot metabolize sugar.

YOUR LIVER

Wait, are we sure the liver belongs with digestive system organs? Absolutely, it does! The liver is the unsung hero of our GI tract. It performs over 500 different functions for our bodies. When it comes to the meal we're digesting, the liver captures and stores the sugar from it in the form of glycogen. It can also use glucose from other carbohydrates to form proteins. It breaks down the fats we consume and stores them. Through the secretion of bile, the liver removes toxins and waste from our digestion.

The liver is like a caretaker watching over our digestive tract. Though the pancreas releases insulin to metabolize the sugar we take in, it's the liver that stores the sugar and releases it into the bloodstream as the body needs it. Also, the liver releases other nutrients, vitamins, and minerals it has stored into the bloodstream as the body needs them.[1]

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YOUR GALLBLADDER

Your gallbladder looks like a pouch and sits beneath the liver. When the liver secretes bile, it goes into the gallbladder, where it is stored and gradually released into the small intestine as needed to help break down food.

YOUR LARGE INTESTINE

Also called the colon, the large intestine is another muscular tube, larger in circumference than the small intestine, and about six feet long. There are five sections to the large intestine: the cecum, ascending colon, transverse colon, descending colon, and sigmoid colon, which is connected to the rectum.

Once food products make it to the large intestine, things slow down. While it may take several hours for food to get through the small intestine, once in the large intestine, it typically requires a day-and-a-half to move that last few feet to the rectum. During this time, the food debris is subjected to several digestive processes that remove nutrients, synthesize vitamins, and turn food into formed waste for elimination. Bacteria are abundant in the colon and contribute to synthesizing the waste we eliminate.

"Bacteria are abundant in the colon and contribute to synthesizing the waste we eliminate."

YOUR RECTUM

This is a gathering chamber about eight inches long connecting to the large intestine at the top and the anus at the bottom. There is a sphincter muscle on the rectum that allows stool to pass through the chamber to the anus.

YOUR ANUS

The last part of the digestive tract, this is a two-inch long channel with a sphincter muscle at either end. Pelvic floor muscles surround the anus and create an angle between the rectum and anus, making it possible for you to control the passage of stool between the two organs.

STEP 2

Know What Gets the Team Upset

We all recognize the signs when our gut isn't happy. We experience symptoms like diarrhea, constipation, bloating, cramps, acid reflux, and vomiting. Here is a list of culprits that are the most likely to cause our digestive distress—things we should avoid consuming to keep our GI team from getting upset.[2]

UNCLEAN OR SPOILED FOOD

When in doubt—throw it out. Bacteria and fungus are opportunistic organisms that flourish in unsuspecting leftovers and unwashed food items. Cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea can result in extreme dehydration, kidney failure, and even death.

"Spicy foods can result in lasting outbreaks of debilitating acid reflux."

SPICY FOOD

Typically, you know when consuming a food item if it is too spicy for your palate because it burns in the mouth, throat, and esophagus and you grab for a drink to wash away the residue. Spicy foods can result in lasting outbreaks of debilitating acid reflux.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

A fair number of adults are lactose intolerant. The intake of dairy products causes these individuals to bloat and experience painful cramps. Even if you are not lactose intolerant, dairy makes your digestive system work harder to produce lactose enzymes.

"The result is often nausea and acid reflux."

ACIDIC FOODS

As tasty as they may be going down, foods like tomatoes, oranges, grapefruit, and lemons tend to irritate the lining of the stomach. The result is often nausea and acid reflux.

ALCOHOL

Particularly later in the evening, alcohol tends to upset the esophagus. The result is painful indigestion.

STEP 3

Learn What Really Pleases the Team

How do we keep all the players on the team healthy and happy? While it may be tempting to suggest a one-size-fits-all diet, the truth is that our individual digestive systems are as unique as our faces. Keeping things functioning smoothly requires us to stay in touch with how our gut react to the foods we offer it. In Step 4, we'll talk about some other activities we can pursue to help keep our digestive systems happy. In this step, we'll focus on our basic nutritional needs.[3]

WHOLE GRAINS

In general, white food products—white rice, flour, bread, and so forth—are made from refined grains. Whole grains are preferable because their fiber content is much higher. The bacteria in our intestines thrive on fiber. In fermenting it, they produce the sort of fatty acids that help our colon cells function properly, which in turn boosts our immune system.

Low carb diets are the rage these days because they encourage weight loss. However, carbohydrates, especially those from whole grains, are essential. They promote the health of our intestinal tract. The best carbs are from whole grains.

"Keeping things functioning smoothly requires us to stay in touch with how our gut react to the foods we offer it."

LEAFY GREENS

These vegetables contain lots of fiber, like whole grains, that contribute to the vast community of healthy microbes dwelling in our digestive tract. More than this, however, "greens" contain an abundance of nutrients that our GI tract uses and disperses throughout the body: vitamins C, K, A, and folate. They also have a natural sugar component that works perfectly in our colon to promote intestinal health.

Among the better choices for leafy greens are spinach, kale, collards, microgreens (these are immature seedlings that are packed with nutrients), cabbage, romaine lettuce, beet greens, arugula, Swiss chard, watercress, turnip greens, and endive. Some of these, like microgreens, can be grown indoors year-round.

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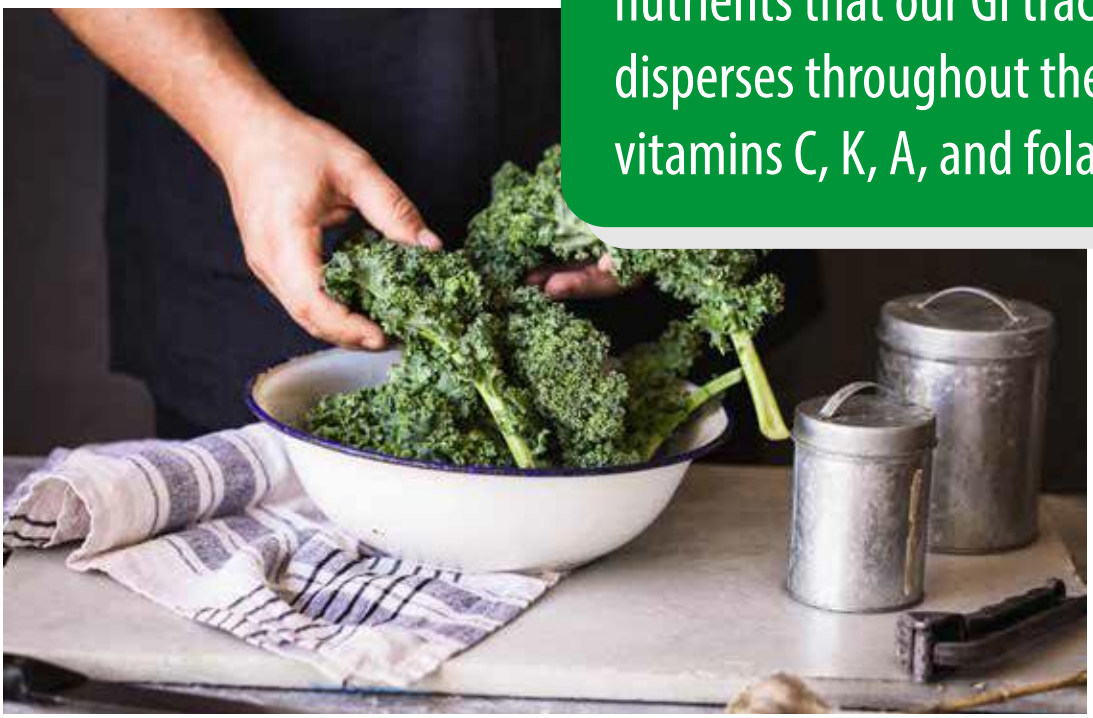

LEAN PROTEIN

Lean meat is pretty much always a better choice than fried meat. Exposure to high-fat meats causes contractions within the colon. Also, exposure to fatty foods, especially fatty meats, can result in outbreaks among those who suffer from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Among the other cautions presented by eating red meat is the indication that it may be responsible for increasing the likelihood of both colon cancer and heart disease.

LOW-FRUCTOSE FRUIT

Fructose, a naturally occurring form of sugar, is present to some degree in virtually all fruit. Some fruits—like apples, mangos, and pears—are quite high in their fructose content. This can result in some individuals experiencing bloating and gas pains.

Better fruits for the GI tract are those that are lower in natural fructose. These include berries, bananas, and citrus fruit. There is a trade-off here in that citrus fruits may be too acidic for some people. This is one of the points at which you have to learn what your digestive team can handle and what gets it upset.

AVOCADOS

These fruits are extremely nutritious. They contain lots of potassium, which is a nutritional necessity that promotes digestive health, and are low in fructose. At the same time, avocados tend to be high in fat content. Thus, avocados should be eaten but in moderation.

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STEP 4

Keeping the Team in Shape

Here are some digestive health tips that have little direct bearing on the particular food you partake at the supper table. Still, these suggestions can have direct, powerful results on achieving and maintaining good digestive health.

A LITTLE SOUP WITH SUPPER

Any fluids you can add to your meal, like juice, broth, soup, herbal tea, or just an extra glass of water with a slice of lime or cucumber in it, helps speed your meal through your system. You'll want to avoid alcohol and caffeine, however, as these won't help.

DOUBLE DOWNSIZE

You can cut down on your total calorie intake and your GI tract won't complain. One way to do this is to take smaller bites and chew slowly. This will make you feel as if you're eating more than you are. Using smaller portions and smaller plates also helps.

"You'll want to avoid alcohol and caffeine, however, as these won't help."

EXERCISE

Working out has so many good results, among which is the improvement of our digestive system. Remember to wait at least 2 hours after eating to exercise.

"When it comes time for a snack, consider yogurt, fermented foods, or supplements with probiotics."

PROBIOTICS

Gut flora or gut microbiota are the microorganisms that live in the digestive tracts of humans. The gut is the main location of human microbiota.When it comes time for a snack, consider yogurt, fermented foods, or supplements with probiotics. This is a tasty way to enhance the health of our intestinal biome.

GET SERENE

Emotions and stress have a direct link to your gut, and now science has proved it. It's called the gut-brain axis and being upset or under pressure can harm the balance of your gut flora and your health. Find ways to manage the stressors in your life and your GI tract will settle down as well.

STEP 5

Scouting Out Possible Troubles

Try as we might, sometimes digestive troubles just crop up. Indeed, sometimes we don't even recognize them for what they are or we may not recognize its severity. Left untreated, GI tract issues aren't just uncomfortable, they can be life-threatening. Here is a list of conditions and symptoms for which you want to be on guard.

UNINTENTIONAL WEIGHT GAIN OR LOSS

When things get out of balance in the GI tract, your body may lose its ability to take on nutrients. Your body doesn't absorb enough food and you lose weight and get fatigued. Sometimes glucose-insulin metabolism gets out of whack, resulting in unanticipated weight gain.

> "Left untreated, GI tract issues aren't just uncomfortable, they can be life-threatening."

FATIGUE OR INSOMNIA

About 90% of your body's serotonin is produced in your gut. When this happy-hormone is diminished, sleep, mood, irritible bowel syndrome, cardiovascular and osteoporosis can become an issue. One prominent source you might never expect is your digestive system.

SKIN IRRITATION

Inflammation of the intestines or "leaky gut" can result in conditions like eczema. This is due to an imbalance of gut flora damaging tight-junctions in the gut's barrier lining. Repairing your gut microbiota may remedy these conditions.

AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

There is growing evidence that problems in our digestive tracts contribute to autoimmune conditions. These are afflictions in which the immune system of the body attacks itself, resulting in illnesses like Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome, celiac disease, and even diabetes.[4]

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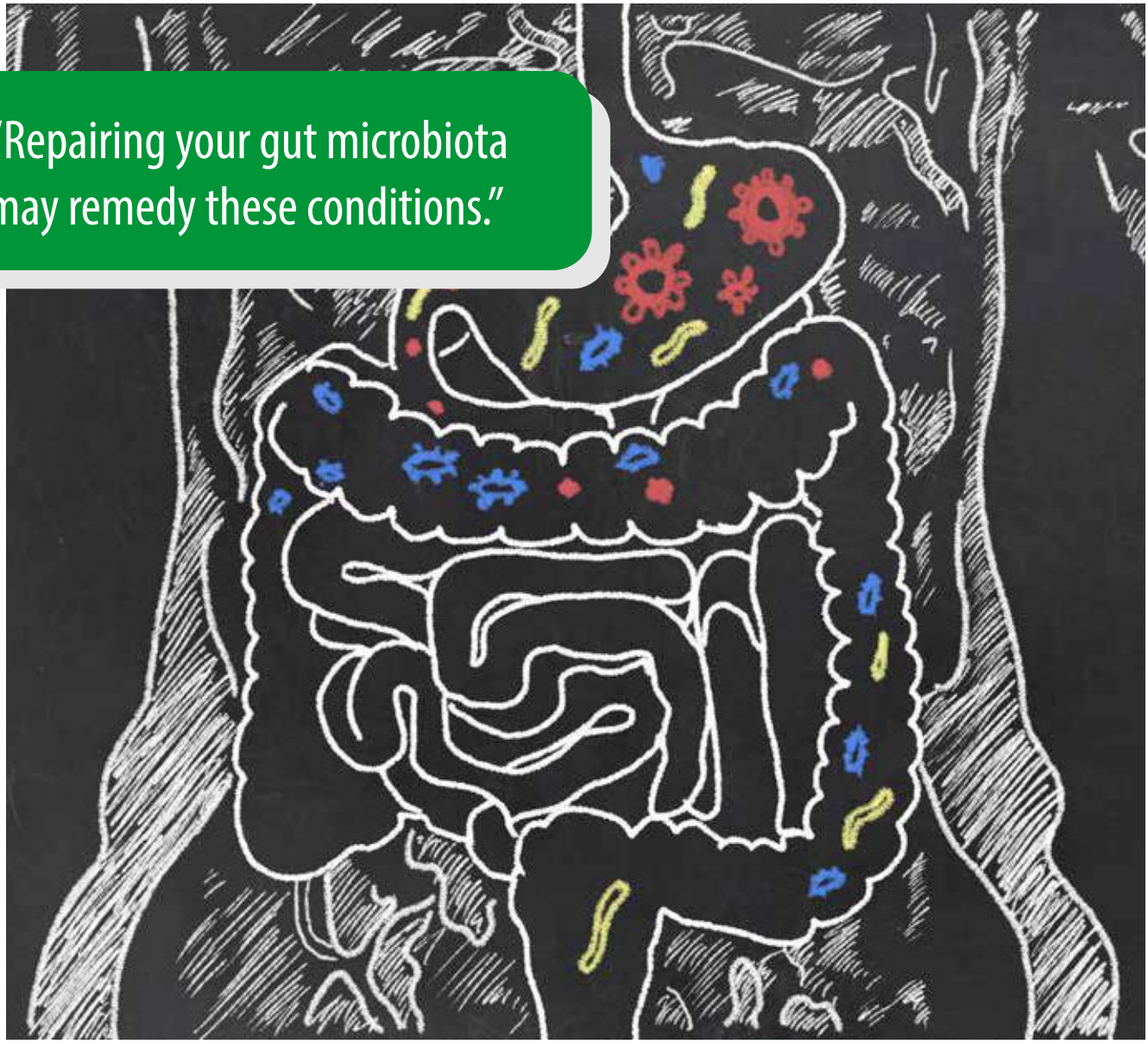

SUMMARY

As human beings, we pride ourselves on being rational creatures. We assume that logic and reason rule our lives and that we are in charge of our actions and decisions. Our guts, however, tell us otherwise.

Few of us realize that we have a secondary nervous system, the Enteric Nervous System (ENS), that has a powerful sway over us of which we unaware. The ENS is made up of two thin layers of cells that coat our digestive system from the esophagus to the rectum. While its primary duty is to assist with the work of our GI tract, the ENS has been demonstrated to interact with our other, better known nervous system to create powerful emotions.

Those feelings of "butterflies in the stomach" or "tightening of the gut" are the ENS making itself known. In times past, the theory was that depression, agitation, and anxiety created digestive problems. Currently, the thinking is that there has been a confusion of cause and effect: through the ENS, our digestive system is causing emotional issues.[5]

The bottom line is that we discount and often totally disregard our digestive system. All that we learn about the importance of our GI tract to our overall health and our emotional well-being is a clear indication that we need to pay attention to our digestion. If we follow this five-step plan, achieve great digestion, and maintain it, our physical and mental well-being will benefit in a multitude of ways.

"The bottom line is that we discount and often totally disregard our digestive system."

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