



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get soluble and insoluble fiber. • Limit foods high in fat. • Choose lean meats. • Eat on a schedule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay hydrated. • Manage stress. • Avoid smoking. • Avoid excessive alcohol and caffeine.
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Green Flags — All Clear 	What this means...
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<p>If you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No abdominal pain or discomfort • Have regular bowel movements • Digestive issues managed with medications and/or diet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good work! • Your symptoms are under control
Keep up the great work!	

Yellow Flags — Caution 	What this means...
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<p>If you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with belching • Constipation or diarrhea • Fatigue/weakness • Dark, tarry stools, or noticeable blood in your stool • Loss of appetite • Feel of nausea • Unexplained weight loss—unintentional weight loss of 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) or 5% of your normal body weight over 6 to 12 months or less without knowing the reason.) • Vomiting • Fever of 102 or higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your medication may need to be adjusted. • The medication may be effecting your digestive system and you may need medicine adjustment. <div style="background-color: #D3D3D3; padding: 5px;"> <p>Call your doctor or consulting nurse, or healthcare provider if symptoms do not improve.</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Number:</p> <p>Instructions:</p> </div>
If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.	

Red Flags—Stop and Think 	What this means...
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<p>If you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rectal bleeding or blood in your stool • Persistent abdominal discomfort, such as cramps, gas, or pain. • A feeling that your bowel doesn't empty completely • Weakness or fatigue • Unexplained weight loss • A change in your bowel habits—like diarrhea or constipation—or a change in the consistency of your stool. • Do not have a bowel movement, particularly when taking a narcotic for three or more days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This indicates you need to be seen by a healthcare professional immediately. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>If possible, notify your healthcare provider and/or consulting nurse.</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Number:</p> <p>Follow these instructions: CALL 9-1-1</p> </div>
If you notice a Red Flag, call 9-1-1. Emergency!	

Digestive Health: Fast Facts

- Food is essential to your good health.
- Digestion starts in the mouth, not in the stomach. Did you know that your salivary glands produce approximately 1.7 liters of saliva each day?
- Eating processed foods is not helpful for your digestive system, since we need to rely on the natural enzymes in food to help us have good digestion. Enzyme rich foods are fresh fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds.
- Your digestive system must break down protein, carbohydrates, and fats in order to use the nutrients to build and nourish cells and to provide energy.
- Your digestive health can change over your lifestyle, depending upon your overall habits, your genetics, and your age.
- It is important to have regular bowel movements, since your body needs to eliminate all the toxins and byproducts.
- Your digestive system can be disrupted by disease, diet, and emotional stress and digestive system disorders develop when there is a problem in the normal functioning of digestion.
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), dyspepsia, abdominal pain, constipation, and nausea are just some of the many health related problems connected with your digestive system.



What can you do?

- Follow your healthcare provider's or dietician's dietary recommendations, which includes eating a balanced diet. Get both insoluble and soluble fiber, unless otherwise directed by your healthcare provider. Insoluble fiber includes wheat bran, vegetables, and whole grains; soluble fiber is from oat bran, nuts, seeds, and legumes.
- According to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Medical experts often recommend a diet low in animal fats and high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to reduce the risk of other chronic diseases, such as coronary artery disease and diabetes. This diet also may reduce the risk of colorectal cancer."
- Know what foods/beverages trigger your digestive problem, e.g., coffee, dairy, or carbonated beverages.
- Eat slowly and chew food well.
- Reduce intake of fried, fattening foods.
- Stay hydrated as water is important for digesting foods.
- Exercise safely (e.g., walking or, if safe, going up and down stairs) on a regular basis.
- If you smoke, consider quitting.
- Manage stress.
- Information regarding colorectal cancer screening and information-provided by Center for Disease Control (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/index.htm>



Digestive Health Self-Management Plan

Southeast Washington Aging and Long Term Care

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