

# UNIT 8: DIGESTION AND ABSORPTION

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## 1.0 Introduction

Units 3 to 7 discussed the various nutrients in the food. Most of these nutrients especially carbohydrates, proteins and fats are complex organic substances that cannot be utilized in the forms they are found in the foods. There is a need to break them down into simpler forms in which the body can absorb and utilize them. This process of breaking them down and absorbing them in for utilization in the cells of the body forms the subject matter of this unit — digestion and absorption.

## 2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the features of the gastrointestinal tract
- Discuss digestion of food in the mouth, stomach and small intestine
- Know the enzymes that are involved in the digestion processes
- Discuss the absorption of amino acids, simple sugars, fatty acids and glycerol.

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### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 The Gastro Intestinal Tract

The gastro-intestinal tract is a tube from the mouth, throat, to the stomach, small intestine and large intestine until it gets to the anus. The different parts of the tract vary in shape, length and internal diameter.

The gastro-intestinal tract is involved in the digestion of the complex food substances of carbohydrate, proteins and fats and oils. It is also involved in the absorption of the products of the digestion of these complex food substances.

Figure 8.1    Diagram of the Gastro-intestinal Tract and those Organs and Glands Concerned with Digestion