



# Set Yourself Up for Digestive Success Guide



**Build Your  
Resilient Gut**  
**MICROBIOME & BEYOND**

## **Build Your Resilient Gut: Set Yourself Up for Digestive Success Guide**

First Edition

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Did you know that...

Digestion starts  
*before* you eat.

Digestion *actually* begins  
when you see, smell, touch,  
taste, and even *think*  
*about* food.

This is called the  
**Cephalic Response**  
and it primes your body for  
optimal digestion.

# Here's what happens...

- ✓ Salivary glands are activated - triggering saliva production
- ✓ The vagus nerve stimulates the stomach to begin producing HCl (stomach acid)
- ✓ The pancreas begins to release digestive enzymes and insulin
- ✓ The gall bladder prepares to release bile
- ✓ Hormones (such as gastrin) increase HCL production, trigger gut motility, and increase gastric mucin production (to protect the stomach lining from the increasing acid production)
- ✓ Dopamine release is triggered as a reward for finding/acquiring food - an evolutionary mechanism to make you want to do it again!



**Important Note:** Any practices or activities you regularly do around eating (watching TV, for example) can become part of this dopamine response. This means, over time, that you will only receive the feel-good dopamine response (in this example) if you're watching TV while you eat (which is bad for digestion). The good news is that this can be re-programmed with mindful eating practices of focusing your attention on the taste, smell, and texture of the healthy food you're eating!

# A healthy **Cephalic Response** is very important, because it...

- ✓ Prepares the body for the digestive process - which is a very high energy-demand process
- ✓ Optimizes digestive secretions, motility, functions, and other factors necessary to reduce or eliminate symptoms such as bloating, indigestion, gas, diarrhea, or constipation
- ✓ Sets up the digestive system for optimal nutrient absorption (you aren't what you eat - you are what you break down and absorb!)
- ✓ May play a role in triggering a healthy and accurate satiety signaling during meals - to reduce overeating



# How to Optimize the Cephalic Response & Set Yourself Up for Digestive Success

## 1. GET YOUR BODY INTO A PARASYMPATHETIC STATE

- Diaphragmatic breathing, meditation, time in nature, etc...
- Watch the [Bonus Module on Breathing & Nervous System Regulation](#) for much more.

## 2. CAREFUL WHAT YOU “CONSUME” WITH YOUR MEALS

- Avoid watching, listening to, or reading anything stress-inducing during meals.
- Turn off the TV, put away the phone, don't read the newspaper!

## 3. AVOID EATING “ON THE GO”

- Make time and space to relax and enjoy a meal.
- No eating at your desk, on the phone, in the car, or while multitasking.

## 4. EAT MINDFULLY

- Appreciate your food. Savor the taste. Take in the smells. Notice the textures.
- This will shift the dopamine response around meals to be focused on the food (what you want it to be!)
- Think about all the ways this food will nourish your body, how your body will break it down and use it for so many benefits - it's incredible when you slow down and think about it! Intention is powerful!



## **5. DON'T DRINK TOO MUCH**

- Avoid excessive liquid consumption during meals.
- Focus hydration efforts at least 30 minutes before and 60 minutes after meals.

## **6. MAINTAIN CONSISTENT MEAL TIMING**

- This helps your body predict digestion needs and optimizes important neuroendocrine balance.
- Meal timing is also a major factor in setting and optimizing circadian rhythm (it's not just light!).

## **7. FINISH EATING BEFORE YOU'RE STUFFED**

- Aim for stopping eating when you feel around 80% full - our satiety response is often delayed.
- This will also help with preventing overeating and can aid in achieving a healthy weight.

## **8. CHEW YOUR FOOD**

- The chewing process is the first stage of digestion for the food entering your body - and an important one!
- Chew each bite of food at least 25-30 times, until it's almost liquid in the mouth.

