

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow your doctor or dietitians dietary recommendations. Eat small, frequent meals as recommended. Include foods rich in fiber, including soluble and insoluble unless otherwise directed by your doctor. Reduce intake of fried, fattening foods. Include probiotics in your diet unless otherwise directed by your doctor. Select lean meats. Eat on schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol. Drink plenty of fluids unless otherwise directed by your doctor. Eat slowly and chew food well. Exercise safely (e.g., walking or, if safe, going up and down stairs) on a regular basis. If you smoke, quit. Maintain a healthy body weight. Manage stress.
<p>Green Flags – All Clear 🚩</p>	
<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 	<p>What this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good work! Your symptoms are under control
<p>Keep up the great work!</p>	
<p>Yellow Flags – Caution 🚩</p>	
<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 Vomiting Fever of 102 or higher Stomach cramps that do not go away 	<p>What this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may need follow-up by your PCP Your medication may need to be adjusted The medication may be effecting your digestive system <div style="background-color: #D3D3D3; padding: 5px;"> <p>Call your doctor, nurse, or home health nurse if symptoms do not improve.</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Number: _____</p> </div>
<p>If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.</p>	
<p>Red Flags—Stop and Think 🚩</p>	
<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 	<p>What this means:</p> <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>Physician: _____</p> <p>Number: _____</p> <p>Instructions: _____</p> <p>In an emergency situation: Call 911</p> </div>
<p>If you notice a Red Flag, call your physician immediately.</p>	

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 a regular bowel movement, 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), Crohn's disease, intestinal distress, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), dyspepsia, colitis, spastic bowel, spastic colon, intestinal gas, irritable colon, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), nausea, heartburn, abdominal cramps, abdominal pain, stomach ache, constipation, loss of appetite, and others are just some of the many health related problems connected with your digestive system.



Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington

At the Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities, we believe every adult deserves to live with dignity. We connect seniors, adults with disabilities and family caregivers to a full range of free and other community resources designed to offer you choice, improve your quality of life and respect your independence.

For more information, call Information and Assistance

Clark County: 360-694-8144—iaclark@dshs.wa.gov

Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties: 360-577-4929—iakelso@dshs.wa.gov

Klickitat County: Goldendale: 509-773-3757 White Salmon: 509-493-3068—
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Skamania County: 509-427-3990—seniorsia@co.skamania.wa.gov

www.helpingelders.org