

HEALTH MATTERS

Healthy Digestion for Optimum Health

Dr. Mimosa Tonnu

One of the most common reasons people see their general practitioner, or primary care provider, is for digestive concerns. The digestive system is made up of organs that work to convert food into energy for the body as well as eliminate toxic byproducts. These organs include the mouth, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, liver, gallbladder, small intestines, large intestine and rectum. It is extremely important to support these organs so that they may function as optimally as possible to digest food and absorb nutrients.



Courtesy photo

The following are some examples of natural ways to support digestion.

Mindful Eating — Digestion starts in the brain. Chew food slowly and enjoy the flavors and aromas. Focus on chewing, tasting and swallowing. Set aside time to fully enjoy and focus on the meal. Try to not eat while watching television or working on the computer. Take sips of room temperature water in between meals to not dilute digestive enzymes in the mouth.

Apple Cider Vinegar — Mix 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar into ¼-cup of water and drink before meals. This will help stimulate the release of digestive enzymes to help digest food.

Fermented Foods — Fermented foods contain excellent pre- and probiotics, which are good bacteria for the small intestine and

An essential ingredient of maintaining healthy digestion naturally is the consumption of plenty of water.

colon. Probiotics can support digestion and nutrient absorption. Fermented foods include miso, sauerkraut, kombucha, kefir, kimchi and tempeh.

Teas — There are many excellent teas with herbs such as licorice, cardamom, coriander, peppermint, fennel and ginger that can support digestion, and help with gas and bloating.

Fiber — Fiber can help support movement through the digestive tract and helps bulk up stool, which can help prevent constipation. The U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA) for fiber is around 30 grams, while the average American consumes half that. Chia seeds, freshly ground flax seeds

Born Healthy

and psyllium husks are great sources of fiber. Mix 1 tablespoon of the fiber of your choice into 8 ounces of water and drink twice a day; or just mix into salads and smoothies.

Aloe Vera Juice or Gel — Aloe vera juice can help digestion and decrease inflammation. Drink ½ cup of juice once a day. Note, the latex part of the aloe plant is a stimulating laxative, which has much different actions than the juice or gel.

Water — Hydration is important for healthy digestion. Drink enough filtered water every day, so that urine is clear, or at least straw yellow.

Sleep — Without rest, the body

will not be able to work effectively at digesting and absorbing nutrients. Try to have at least seven to eight hours of restful sleep a night.



Dr. Mimosa Tonnu

The above advice offers some basic examples. There are many more natural and integrative approaches to explore including vitamins, minerals and herbs that can enhance and strengthen digestive processes.

Those with digestive concerns such as bloating, indigestion, acid reflux, chronic constipation and abdominal pain should speak with their doctor since these symptoms can be caused by more serious conditions. Naturopathic doctors are highly qualified practitioners to approach these issues in a safe and effective manner.

Make an appointment today to discuss other strategies and options, for safe and effective digestion.

Dr. Mimosa Tonnu utilizes naturopathic, integrative and holistic medicines to treat the whole family. She's seen patients for both acute and chronic health conditions at Born Naturopathic Associates, Inc., in Alameda. Contact us today via www.bornnaturopathic.com, or at 550-4023.

How to Lower Your Medicare Drug Costs

Greg Dill

Driving near Monterey recently, I stopped at a roadside stand to buy some freshly picked strawberries. May is high season for California strawberries, and the fields were exploding with beautiful, ripe fruit. The gentleman working the stand, Jack, asked what I do for a living. When I told him I work for Medicare, he said he was having difficulty paying for his prescription drugs. So we talked for a while about ways he might be able to reduce his drug costs.

If you have Medicare, and you're having trouble paying for prescription drugs, signing up for Medicare's Part D prescription drug coverage may help, even if you have to pay a late-enrollment penalty. There are other ways you may be able to save. Consider switching to drugs that cost less. Ask your doctor if there are generic, over-the-counter, or less expensive brand-name drugs that could work just as well as the ones you're taking now.

Switching to lower-cost drugs can save you hundreds or possibly thousands of dollars a year.

Visit the Medicare Plan Finder at Medicare.gov/find-a-plan to get information on ways to save money in your Medicare drug plan. Or call 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227) and ask our customer service representatives.

You may also be able to lower your Medicare prescription drug costs by:

- Exploring national and community based programs that may help you with your drug costs, like the National Patient Advocate Foundation or the National Organization for Rare Disorders. Get information on federal, state and private assistance programs in your area on the Benefits Check Up website at benefitscheckup.org.

The help you get from some of these programs may count toward your true out-of-pocket (TrOOP) costs. TrOOP costs are the expenses that count toward your Medicare drug plan out-of-pocket expenses — up to \$4,950 in 2017. These costs determine when your catastrophic coverage will begin.

- Looking into Manufacturer's Pharmaceutical Assistance

Medicare & You

Programs (sometimes called Patient Assistance Programs) offered by the makers of the drugs you take. Many major drug manufacturers offer assistance for people enrolled in a Medicare drug plan.

Find out whether the manufacturers of the drugs you take offer assistance by visiting Medicare.gov/pharmaceutical-assistance-program or calling 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227). TTY users should call 877-486-2048. Such assistance programs aren't part of Medicare Part D, so any help you get from this type of program won't count toward your TrOOP costs.

- Applying for Extra Help paying for your Medicare prescription drugs. If you have Medicare and have limited income and resources, you may qualify for Extra Help. To apply for Extra Help, contact Social Security by visiting socialsecurity.gov/11020 or by calling 800-772-1213. TTY users should call 800-325-0778. Extra Help can save you thousands of dollars on drug costs.

When I told him I work for Medicare, he said he was having difficulty paying for his prescription drugs.

If you need help finding resources like the ones described above, call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and ask for free personalized counseling for people with Medicare.

To get the phone number for your state's SHIP, visit shiptacenter.org, or call 800-MEDICARE.

And if you're wondering whether Jack charged me for the strawberries, he did offer them for free. But since helping people with Medicare is a big part of my job, I told him I preferred to pay despite his kind offer. We settled on a fair price, along with some freshly baked shortcake.

Greg Dill is Medicare's regional administrator for Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and the Pacific Territories. Get answers to Medicare questions by calling 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227).

Therapist Offers Help with Experience of Loneliness

Dr. Natalie Gelman

A question was submitted asking me to make a recommendation of how to handle the feeling of loneliness.

Feeling alone is not unique to any age. When we are children, we often feel that other children do not like us or want to be around us. We feel rejected. We feel sad. We feel helpless. We feel alone.

I am reminded of a study that was done with adults. Twelve people were asked to stand in a circle and to throw a ball to a person in the circle. After doing this for a while, each person was asked what the experience was like. The ones who received the ball often, felt good and enjoyed the game. The ones who never got the ball felt left out.

As the interviews continued, many remembered having a similar experience in childhood. To have the ball thrown to you was to be acknowledged. To not receive the ball was to be ignored and not included.

What's on Your Mind?

This was the purpose of the exercise. We have experiences as children which can lead to a feeling of loneliness. Clients have told me stories of not being invited to a birthday party or not getting Valentine's Day cards at school. They feel sad.

With children, I recommend that a parent ask a teacher to identify another child who tends to be alone or not included. These children can often be identified at lunch or during recess. I encourage that these children be brought together in an activity at school or by the parents outside of school.

I would like to recommend to schools that this issue be discussed by students and that a place can be designated where a child can go when feeling alone. The other students would be encouraged to go

to these children and invite them to participate in something or talk to them.

As we age, loneliness can result when we end a relationship with a partner or a friend. When I ran a discussion group on aging at the Mastick Senior Center, many participants talked about loneliness. Some had moved to a new area. Some were no longer working and did not know what to do during the day. We can make a decision that seems to be a good one at the time, and not realize the full ramifications until it is too late. Moving leaves people behind; retirement means leaving people and activity behind.

The Mastick Center is a great resource for those older than 50 years of age. Classes and groups are available all day. The subjects are varied and always changing. It is a place to be around people with similar interests. Friendships do form there.

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