

Stomach

During the next 365 days, you will dump a truckload of groceries into your amazing stomach . . . more than half a ton of meats, grains, oils, cheeses, sugars, fruits and vegetables . . . an infinite variety of compounds, mixtures, and textures. And if your digestion is as sound as it should be, your stomach will handle that groaning smorgasbord with never a complaint and call hungrily for more on the morning of the 366th day.

50 TONS TO THE QUART

In an average lifetime, your quart-size stomach digests as much as half a hundred tons of the earth's abundance, everything from fruit to nuts.

Eating is a part of life . . . one of the great pleasures of life . . . and there's nothing so satisfying, so rewarding, as a good meal taken in the warm company of family and friends. The old adage, "You never miss your health until you lose it," was never more meaningful than in sound digestion.

YOU HAVE NO CONTROL

Once food is swallowed it passes completely out of your conscious control. Regardless of the type or amount of food eaten, your digestion requires a delicate timing and coordination supervised by your brain and nerves. For nearly thirty feet from the top of the esophagus to the anus, your alimentary canal (gastrointestinal tract) proceeds with digestion and elimination without direction on your part. You cannot stop the process, even if you want to.

FOOD PUSHED 30 FEET

Digestion begins in the mouth. The teeth and tongue chew and mash the food and mix it with saliva, which moistens and prepares the food for swallowing.

The act of swallowing triggers muscular contractions which close off undesirable passageways, such as the windpipe.

The passageway left open is the esophagus, a muscular tube about 10 inches long. Food does not fall through it like a rock. Instead, a series of automatic muscular contractions propel the food in the stomach and push it through its entire 30-foot journey. A variety of nerve circuits direct and coordinate these contractions and the entire digestive process.

WHERE IS YOUR STOMACH?

The stomach lies in the left upper portion of the abdomen, nested against the diaphragm. Its average length is 10

inches, its average width at the widest part is five inches, and it has an average capacity of one quart.

STOMACH GOES INTO ACTION

As a swallow at a time, the esophagus pushes the chewed and saliva-softened food into the stomach. The stomach's thick muscular walls begin to churn, mash, and pulverize the food, mixing it with gastric juices into a gruel-like consistency called chyme.

Gastric juice contains hydrochloric acid and various enzymes. When the nerve system is functioning normally, stomach glands secrete gastric juice continuously, as much as 2 to 3 quarts in 24 hours. The rate of secretion is determined by a complex nerve network and chemically triggered mechanisms.

Why doesn't your stomach digest itself? Hydrochloric acid is strong enough to eat holes in a tablecloth, but does not eat away at the stomach walls. A film of mucous glands lines the walls and protects them from the acid. The chief function of hydrochloric acid is to provide the proper chemical atmosphere for the enzymes to work satisfactorily.

Enzymes accelerate the chemical reactions in the digestive process. They are absolutely essential to life, because without them bodily functions would "get out of time."

Pepsin is the gastric juice enzyme that begins to break down protein compounds. Again, the mucous film on the stomach walls acts as a buffer. Otherwise pepsin would begin to digest the stomach itself.

Researchers have demonstrated many times that stimulation of the vagus nerve causes the stomach's glands to secrete abnormally strong gastric juice containing too much pepsin, thus pointing out the importance of a normal nerve supply in keeping the stomach healthy. Chiropractic adjustments facilitate that normal nerve supply!