



FOR  
YOUR OWN  
**GOOD**

THE MANUAL FOR  
BETTER MEN'S HEALTH

BY  
EL CAMINO HOSPITAL



# *GOING* **WITH YOUR** *GUT*

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## **DIGESTIVE CONDITIONS**

Eating a good meal. It's one of the distinct pleasures of life. It's also the beginning of one of the most complicated processes in your body.

Digestion involves multiple organs and tissues, and it's great when they all perform smoothly. But when they don't, the symptoms can range from mild to debilitating.

Most digestive — or gastrointestinal (GI) — problems go away with time or simple treatments. But sometimes they can disrupt your life and require ongoing care.

## THE SQUEAKY WHEEL — WHEN TO SUSPECT A PROBLEM

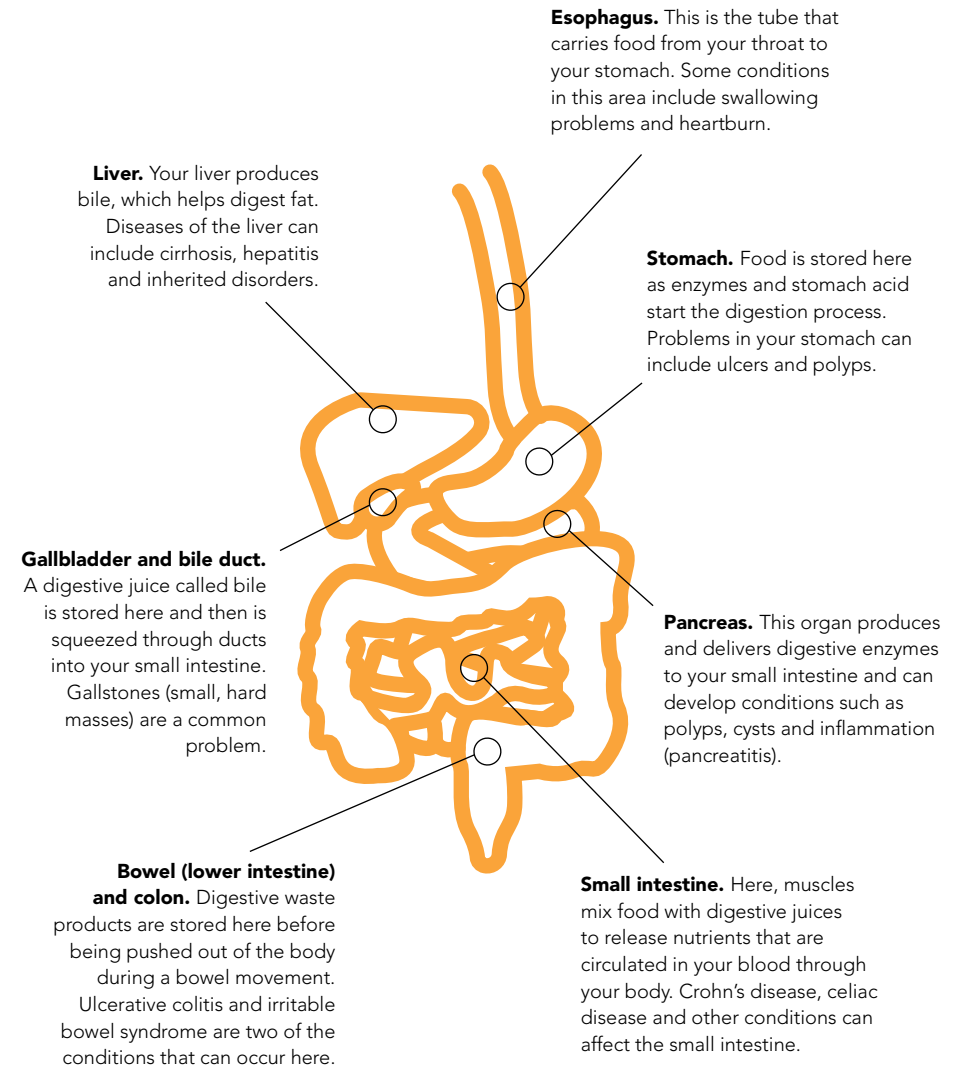
The symptoms of a digestive condition are often temporary, and if you are otherwise healthy, they can be easy to ignore. In some cases though, your symptoms may mean you have a condition that needs treatment.

Make an appointment to see your doctor if you have any of these:

- **Abdominal pain.** If it's severe or your abdomen is swollen or tender to the touch, go to the hospital right away.
- **Blood from your digestive tract**, such as in vomit or stool.
- **Constipation** if it's a substantial change from your normal bowel habits or if you also have vomiting, weight loss or a distended abdomen.
- **Diarrhea** if it lasts more than five days or contains blood.
- **Difficulty swallowing**, especially if swallowing is painful or has led to weight loss.
- **Nausea and vomiting** if you also have abdominal pain.
- **Regurgitation.** This is the spitting up of food when you don't feel nauseated and aren't vomiting.

## PINPOINTING YOUR PROBLEM

Problems in your digestive tract (also called your GI tract) can happen at any point along the way. The most common disorders are related to your:



## GET SCREENED FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

Colorectal cancer is one of the most common types of cancers, but the good news is that it's preventable. Screening can find precancerous polyps, which your doctor can remove before cancer starts.

Most men should start screening at age 50. If you have risk factors such as a family history of colorectal cancer, your doctor may recommend that you start earlier. Ask which combination of these screening tests would be best for you:

- A digital rectal exam (DRE) every five to 10 years.
- A fecal occult blood test every year.
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years.
- Double-contrast barium enema every five years.
- Colonoscopy every 10 years.

## YOUR LIFESTYLE CAN AFFECT YOUR DIGESTIVE HEALTH

You can avoid some digestive problems or improve your symptoms with changes to your diet and lifestyle. For example:

- **Smoking** contributes to disorders such as acid reflux and peptic ulcers, and it's also associated with cancers in the esophagus, stomach and other areas.
- **Adding fiber** to your diet and getting regular exercise can relieve constipation or help you avoid it.
- **Avoiding stress** may help improve symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.
- **Maintaining a healthy weight** and eating smaller meals can relieve symptoms of acid reflux.

## GET GUT HELP AND GET BETTER

If you think you may have a digestive condition, your next move should be to see your doctor. He or she may recommend treatments or lifestyle changes that can relieve your symptoms or even resolve minor problems.

## TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

If your doctor suspects that you have a more serious problem, he or she may refer you to a specialist such as a gastroenterologist. If you are over 50 or have a family history of digestive problems, your gastroenterologist may suggest a schedule of screening tests designed for your specific risks.



It's a good idea to see a specialist who is associated with a hospital program that focuses on digestive conditions such as [Digestive Health services](#) at El Camino Hospital. That way you'll be assured of getting the latest in diagnostic care and advanced treatments such as:

- **Diagnostic tests and screenings.** These depend on your symptoms and risks. They often include endoscopy, liver biopsy and tests for motility disorders.
- **Medicines.** Prescription medications can help with many digestive conditions. Depending on your condition, your doctor may recommend antibiotics, medications to reduce stomach acid, anti-inflammatory drugs, pain relievers or other medications.
- **Interventional endoscopy.** The same endoscopy procedures used to screen for problems can often be used to treat them in the same visit. This can result in a faster recovery with very low complication rates.
- **Gastrointestinal motility services.** Motility disorder treatments include biofeedback therapy, Botox injections, gastric electrical stimulation, pneumatic dilation, sacral nerve stimulation and the Secca® procedure.
- **Surgery.** Some digestive disorders, such as cancer, require surgery. Sometimes people with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis may also need surgery.



Digestive conditions can cause deeply uncomfortable symptoms. Make an appointment today to start feeling better. You can find a doctor who specializes in treating these conditions by calling [408-866-3856](tel:408-866-3856).

# ONLINE RESOURCES *FOR* MEN'S HEALTH

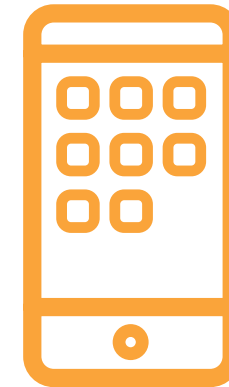
USE THESE RESOURCES  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT  
STAYING HEALTHY

## DIGESTIVE HEALTH

[Digestive Health.](#) Learn how specialists at El Camino Hospital treat the full range of conditions that affect the digestive system.

[Digestive Health Specialty Programs.](#) Read about interventional endoscopy and other specialty programs at El Camino Hospital.

[Foods for a Healthier Gut.](#) Find out how your diet affects your digestive health.





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