

# Health & Wellness

January  
2026  
Issue 16

## Digestive Disorders

This month's Health & Wellness topic is **Digestive Disorders**. For this issue, we're going to go over the process of digestion, different digestive disorders, and what causes digestive disorders.



### Contents:

*Health & Wellness Education*  
**pg.2**

*Brain Boosters*  
**pg.8**

*Our Picks of the Month*  
**pg.10**

*Brain Booster Answers*  
**pg.11**

Welcome to DuPage Senior Citizens Council/Kane Senior Council's January Health & Wellness Newsletter!

We're here to bring you a new topic relating to wellness as well as new brain teasers, seasonal recipes, book recommendations, and more!

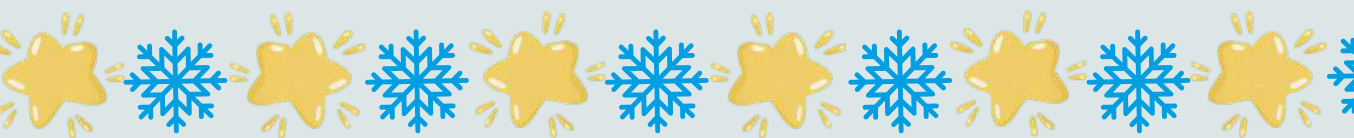
*Providing Meals and More...*



DuPage Senior  
Citizens Council



Kane Senior  
Council



# Health & Wellness Education

## ***Digestive Disorders***

### **Introduction**

Nutrition involves getting essential nutrients from food, while digestion is the body's process of breaking food down into these absorbable components...

...moving them through the digestive tract with help from organs like the liver and pancreas, and eliminating waste, all to fuel energy, growth, and repair.



**Information adapted from:**

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/7040-gastrointestinal-diseases>

# The Process of Digestion

1

## Ingestion & Mechanical Breakdown

Chewing in the mouth breaks food into smaller pieces, starting mechanical digestion.



## Peristalsis

Muscles push food down the esophagus to the stomach

2

## Chemical Breakdown

Stomach acid and enzymes, plus juices from the pancreas, liver, and small intestine, break down food into basic nutrients

3

4

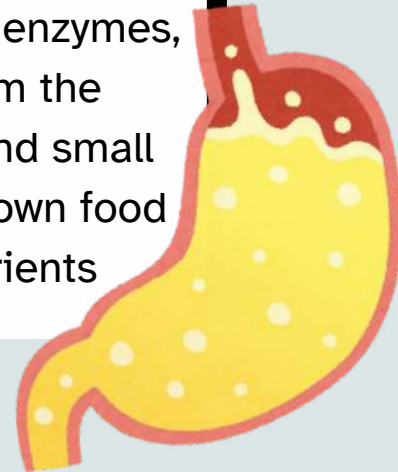
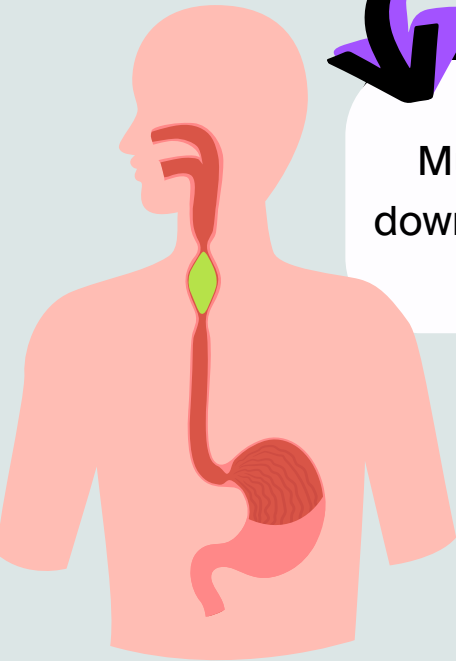
## Absorption

The small intestine absorbs these simple nutrients and water into the bloodstream

5

## Elimination

The large intestine absorbs remaining water, turning liquid waste into stool, which is then eliminated



# What are Gastrointestinal Diseases?

Health conditions that affect your **gastrointestinal tract**, also known as your **GI tract**

## GI Diseases Can be... Acute or Chronic:

An **acute** GI disease is one that happens suddenly and lasts a short period of time

A **chronic** GI disease can affect you for many months or years



## What are the most common Gastrointestinal Diseases?

### Constipation

*-Causes hard-to-pass or infrequent bowel movements.*

You may strain or push hard to have a bowel movement. You can treat your constipation at home by drinking more water and eating more fiber. Over-the-counter laxatives can also be helpful too.

### Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

*-Where your intestinal muscles contract more or less often than normal.*

Abdominal pain, gas, and bloating are common symptoms. Treating IBS can include changing your eating habits or taking medication that your provider prescribes.

### Diverticular Disease

*-When small pouches form in the wall of your large intestine.*

When they become infected it's called diverticulitis. This can lead to bleeding and bowel obstruction. Treatment could involve eating more fiber, taking antibiotics or, if needed, surgery.

### Hemorrhoids

*-Swollen veins in your rectum.*

Straining when having a bowel movement is the most common cause, but you can get them other ways as well. Avoiding constipation activities that cause straining can help hemorrhoids. Your healthcare provider can also remove large, painful or persistent hemorrhoids.

### Colon Polyps and Colon Cancer

*-Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in the United States.*

Colonoscopy screenings help detect the disease, sometimes long before symptoms appear. Almost all colorectal cancers begin as colon polyps, benign growths in the tissues lining your colon and rectum. Screening for colorectal cancer is important and early detection of the disease gives you the best chance at a cure.

## **Colitis**

*-There are several types of colitis, which are conditions that cause inflammation of your bowel.*

Colitis can cause diarrhea, rectal bleeding, abdominal cramps and urgency. Ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease are two common types of colitis.

## **Gastritis**

*-Inflammation in your stomach lining.*

You may have symptoms like loss of appetite, stomach pain or nausea. Infection, chemicals, and autoimmune diseases are common causes. Most cases of gastritis improve within a few days.

## **Acid reflux/GERD**

*-When acid from your stomach flows back up into your esophagus and throat.*

It causes a burning feeling that can feel like a sore throat. Medications, changing your eating habits, and surgery are options for treatment.

## **Indigestion (dyspepsia)**

*-Stomach pain or discomfort after eating.*

It's very common and typically happens within a few minutes to a few hours after having a meal. You can usually relieve your symptoms with an antacid.

## **Celiac Disease**

*-Causes problems in your GI tract when you eat gluten, a protein found in wheat and grains.*

It can cause symptoms like stomach pain, gas, and bloating. It's also considered an autoimmune condition because your immune system attacks gluten when it's in your small intestine. The attack can damage your intestine enough that it stops working properly.

## **Gastroenteritis**

*-When inflammation spreads from your stomach into your intestines.*

It causes pain, vomiting and diarrhea. It usually happens when you have a bacterial infection from food poisoning or a virus like the stomach flu.

## **Lactose Intolerance**

*-When your small intestine can't absorb lactose, an ingredient in milk and dairy products.*

It causes symptoms like diarrhea, bloating and gas. Treatment mainly involves avoiding foods and beverages that contain lactose.

## **Barrett's Esophagus**

*-Changes the appearance of the lining of your esophagus.*

Sometimes, it doesn't cause symptoms, but chronic acid reflux/GERD almost always causes it. People with this condition have a higher risk of developing esophageal cancer.

# GI Diseases Can be...

## Functional or Structural:

A **functional GI disease** is when your healthcare provider **can't see** any **physical** or **structural** issues when they examine your digestive tract.

**Constipation, gas, and diarrhea** are examples of functional GI diseases. These irritate your GI tracts and lead to uncomfortable symptoms.

Some of the most common **causes** of functional GI problems are:

- Eating a diet **low in fiber** or **high in processed foods**
- Not getting adequate **exercise**
- **Traveling** or other **changes** in your typical **routine**
- **Stress** and **anxiety**
- Taking certain **medicines**
- **Food sensitivities** or eating something that didn't "**agree**" with you

Treatment for functional GI diseases usually involves **lifestyle changes** like eating more **fiber-rich foods**, getting more **physical activity** or avoiding **triggers**.

Sometimes, functional problems go away on their own within a few days.

A **structural GI disease** is when your healthcare provider **can see** evidence of an issue when they examine you.

Structural GI diseases are typically more complicated. They tend to cause symptoms that last longer and don't get better with lifestyle changes alone.

Structural problems cause issues your provider can see - such as inflammation or blockages. Common examples include hemorrhoids, colon polyps, and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

**Causes** of structural GI diseases are more **widespread**.

## WRAP UP

### Can Gastrointestinal Diseases be prevented?

You can lower your risk of many GI diseases by eating **nutritious foods**, being **physically active** several days each week, and going to the **bathroom** as soon as you need to go.

*For more health and wellness tips, information and resources, visit our website.*



# BRAIN BOOSTERS

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Fill in the blank squares so that each row, each column and each 3-by-3 block contain all of the digits 1 thru 9.

## RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

*What is always in front of you, but  
can't be seen?*

# WORD SEARCH

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## WORD BANK

**FUNCTIONAL**

**DIGESTION**

**INGESTION**

**PERISTALSIS**

**ELIMINATION**

**MECHANICAL**

**STRUCTURAL**

**ABSORPTION**

**BREAKDOWN**

# January Recipe: Roasted Root Vegetables

Recipe from: [aplaceformom.com](http://aplaceformom.com)

## Ingredients:

- ½ red onion, cut into wedges
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled
- 2 large carrots, peeled
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 large beet, scrubbed and trimmed
- several new potatoes, skin on, cut in halves or quarters
- 4 teaspoons mixed dried herbs, like rosemary, oregano, and parsley



## Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 F and grease a large baking sheet.
2. Cut root vegetables into even-sized pieces, about an inch each.
3. Toss root vegetables with olive oil, herbs, salt, and pepper.  
Spread in an evenly spaced layer on the prepared pan.
4. Bake for 30-40 minutes, stirring and flipping vegetables twice or until soft.

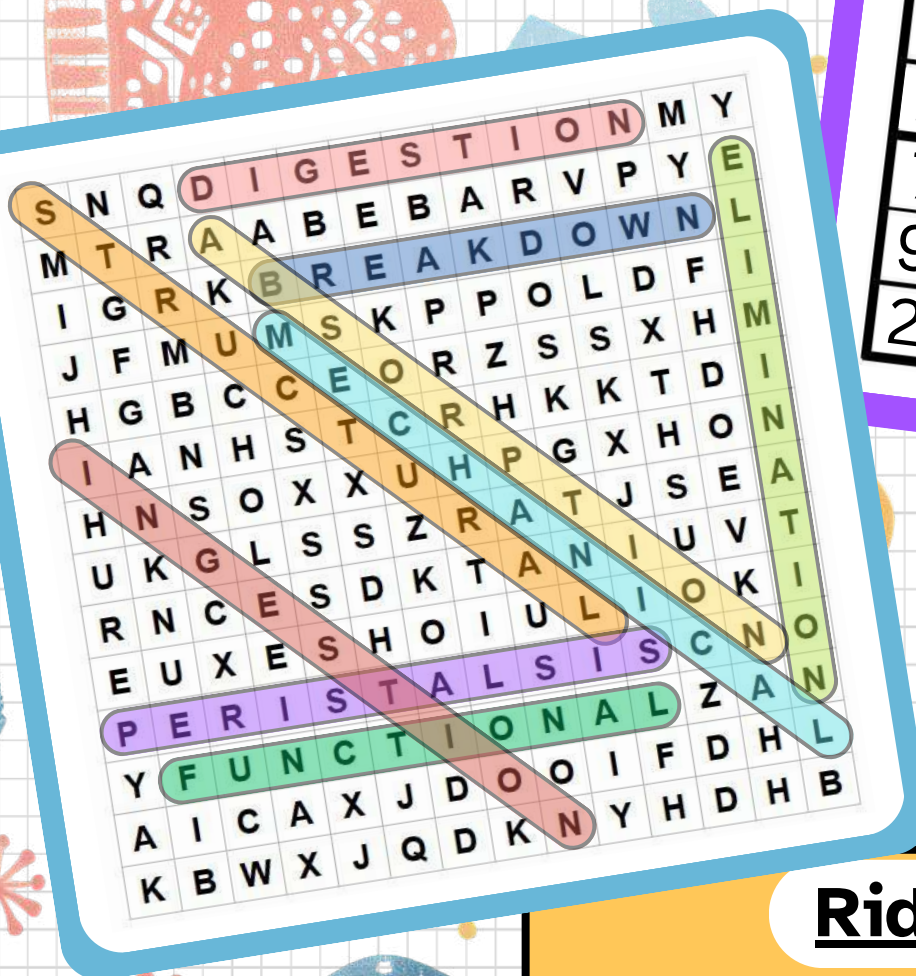
# Our Book Pick of the Month

## *The Keeper of Lost Things* by Ruth Hogan

Anthony Peadrew is an author who collects objects dropped or left behind by others, making up his own collection of lost things about which he writes stories. As Anthony nears the end of his life, he entrusts his estate to his assistant, Laura, who begins to reunite the lost objects with their owners.



# ANSWER KEY



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| 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 5 |

## Riddle Answer:

*What is always in front of you but  
can't be seen?*

**Answer: The Future**

## Print Monthly Meal Menus at:

[www.DuPageSeniorCouncil.org/Home-Delivered-Meals-Menus](http://www.DuPageSeniorCouncil.org/Home-Delivered-Meals-Menus)

[www.KaneSeniorCouncil.org/Meals-On-Wheels](http://www.KaneSeniorCouncil.org/Meals-On-Wheels)



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