

Digestive Health

Human health is like the health of an automobile. Just as high octane gasoline is not sufficient to provide a high-performance car with full power and efficiency if an engine tune-up is badly needed, likewise, no matter how nutritiously we eat... we will not experience wellness and energy if our individual cells (the microscopic engines of our body) and our digestive system engine are in need of a tune-up. Engine sludge degrades the performance of cars and humans.

When it comes to figuring out if you're digesting things properly and eating healthy, Dr. Mehmet Oz says that you should rely on your senses in the bathroom. For starters, have you ever thought about the importance of what your bowel movement sounds like when it hits the water? Listen up!

"You want to hear what the stool, the poop, sounds like when it hits the water. If it sounds like a bombardier, you know, 'plop, plop, plop,' that's not right because it means you're constipated. It means the food is too hard by the time it comes out. It should hit the water like a diver from Acapulco hits the water [swoosh]."

The next thing Dr. Oz recommends is looking at your stool—c'mon, you've done it before! You should look twice—look at the shape and then, the color.

"It should be an S shape and you want to make sure the color's normal because the color of the poop tells you a lot about how you made it," Dr. Oz says. "You don't want pieces. Food is a medicine for you. It helps you. If the stool is in pieces by the time you finished digesting your food, you don't have enough of it left to poop out in the right way and probably it's hurt the colon that has to process it." At the end of the day you can analyze your body really effectively by looking at what comes out of your body. Here's a pop quiz. What part of your body is most similar to your brain? The surprising answer is your small bowel, where most digestion occurs.

"That's the saying, you know, you've got blank for blank," Dr. Oz jokes. "But the thing about the small bowel is it has primitive messenger chemicals that tell the bowel how to work. If your bowel's not happy, those same chemicals influence your brain."

In this bowel the green stuff is bile, material in the process of being digested. Dr. Oz says it's important to listen to what your bowel tells you.

"A lot of times you don't pick up on the subtle clues," he says. "It will tell you that you feel washed out or tired or a little bit of cramping. Or, you know, if you wake up in the morning and just don't feel like yourself, you probably had something allergic that you didn't clue into."

Not going "number two" enough? New health guidelines suggest we should drink about eight glasses of water a day, about 64 ounces, and get 25 grams of fiber to stay regular and healthy. World-renowned heart surgeon Dr. Mehmet Oz says that if we can work on

our fiber and water intake, our digestive systems could dramatically improve.

"High fiber comes in vegetable form: artichokes, lima beans, soybeans," he says. "You can get fruits that have lots of fiber like grapefruit, blackberries and raspberries."

Another fantastic source of fiber is whole grains. Dr. Oz says that eating whole grains isn't just the latest craze—they offer multiple benefits to your health. You may have already heard about the health benefits of whole wheat bread and oatmeal, but now doctors say other whole grains like spelt, bulgar and quinoa can reduce cholesterol and high blood pressure and even help prevent heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. They say that whole grains help flush fat and cholesterol out of your system and provide powerful antioxidants that help you stay healthier, look younger and live longer. The USDA just recently recommended eating at least three servings a day.

One of Oprah's favorite whole grain choices is steel cut oatmeal for its crunchy texture. Dr. Oz says steel cut oatmeal and other whole grain foods are high in fiber—great for digestion.

"[Steel cut oatmeal] doesn't have a lot of calories, and it drags the food [you eat] along so it can't become like putty—until it gets to the very end," Dr. Oz says. "Whole grains are an insoluble fiber, so it pulls water with it and it binds to all the other stuff you're eating that may not be so good for you. It gets the whole bolus moving on."

Foods rich in magnesium like beets, raisins, dates and soybeans are important because they get your bowels moving! The more natural, the better, says Dr. Oz.

"The easy part of this message is all of these foods come out of the ground looking the way they look when you eat them," he says. "That's the only thing you have to remember. 'Does it look the way it looked when it came out of the ground when I eat it? There are no white bread plants!'"

