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DIGESTIVE FIRST AID: BEST NATURAL REMEDIES

Most of us need some digestive first aid after overindulging during the Christmas period and beyond. Here are my best tried and tested home remedies to relieve most digestive upsets. It may be a good idea to print and keep them handy in the kitchen!

Bloating and gas

- **A strong cup of peppermint tea** should give relief quickly, especially if you walk around as you drink it.
- **A hot water compress or bottle** placed directly on the abdomen quickly relieves gas pains.
- **Soothing seeds** – mix of anise, caraway, dill and fennel seeds. To release the healing oils gently crush the seeds and add ½-1 teaspoon to a cup of just-boiled water. Let it steep for 10 minutes. Strain and drink. Repeat as needed.
- **Ginger tea** – add 1 teaspoon of powdered ginger to 1 glass of just-boiled water. Drink 3 cups of the mixture throughout the day. You can also use freshly grated ginger, steep for 10 minutes in hot water.

Heartburn (reflux)

- **In case of acid indigestion** – thoroughly chew a tablespoon of dry rolled oats, and then swallow.
- **Digestive seeds** – chew a mix of a few anise seeds, cardamom seeds or caraway seeds, these are great for sore stomach.
- **Honey and apple cider vinegar** – mix 1 teaspoon of honey and 2 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar into a glass of hot water and drink the mixture.
- **Eat papaya** after meals – fresh, ripe papaya helps digestion thanks to the potent digestive enzyme papain.
- **Add fresh basil to food** while cooking – it will make the food more digestible and also help prevent constipation.
- **Avoid coffee, fried foods, alcohol, chocolate and spicy foods** – they trigger reflux.
- **Don't lie down** – the backflow of stomach acid into the oesophagus increases when you lie down (especially on your right side).

Constipation

- **First thing in the morning** drink 2 glasses of warm filtered water mixed with 1 teaspoon of raw honey and 1-2 tablespoons of lemon juice. This has a cleansing effect on the digestive tract and encourages bowel movements (peristalsis).



- **Prune drink** – most of us know this! Cover 10 prunes with warm water and leave overnight. In the morning before breakfast eat the moist prunes and drink the juice diluted with water.
- **The combination of dried apricots and prunes** is said to work wonders. Soak six of each overnight. Next morning eat three of each and drink half of the juice diluted with water (1 glass). Then in the late afternoon or an hour before dinner, eat the remaining three apricots and prunes.
- **Drink half a glass of spinach juice** mixed with half a glass of water twice daily for two to three days, and find relief even from severe constipation.
- **1 or 2 cups of raspberries**, they have the highest fiber content of all fruits) into your diet each day.
- **Olive oil** – take 1 tablespoon of extra-virgin, cold pressed olive oil in the morning and 1 tablespoon an hour after dinner.
- **Persimmons** are well-known to relieve constipation.
- **For extra help** – take 2 tablespoons of ground flaxseeds and cover with warm water, when they swell add 1-2 tablespoons of wheat or oat bran, mix well and eat the mixture with a big glass of water. Best done before sleep at night.
- **Aerobic exercise** is an excellent laxative! Do at least 30 minutes every morning.

Diarrhoea

It's dangerous as it quickly depletes the body of potassium, magnesium and sodium (or electrolytes) leaving the sufferer tired and dehydrated. Positive aspects: helps to speed up toxin removal.

- **Drink lots of water** – sip water in small quantities constantly during the day.
- **Chamomile and/ or peppermint teas** are very soothing and hydrating.
- **Infusion of dried blueberries** – this is one of the best remedies for diarrhoea. Take 1 tablespoon of dried blueberries and add 1 glass of boiling water. Steep for around 15 minutes, drink whilst warm. Drink 4-6 glasses of this drink per day until diarrhoea subsides.
- **Raspberry leaf tea** is a popular folk remedy for children and adults. Combine 1 tablespoon of dried raspberry leaves with 2 cups of water, add small piece of cinnamon stick and simmer for 25 minutes. Strain, cool and drink throughout the day.
- **Barley water** – very effective and great for soothing the gut! Here is the recipe:
1.5 litres of water
90g pearl barley
1-2 lemons
1 tablespoon of honey

Place barley and water in a saucepan and bring to boil. Simmer over low heat for 30 minutes then strain into a glass jug. Cut the lemons into thin slices, keep the skin on, add to barley water, cover and refrigerate overnight. Strain the mixture the next day and discard the solids. Add honey and stir to dissolve.

Serve chilled with your favourite herbs such as mint, pineapple sage etc. Barley water soothes gut inflammation and helps in detoxification especially of the kidneys and the bladder. It's also a great thirst quencher! ***Don't drink barley water if you are on the gluten free diet.*