



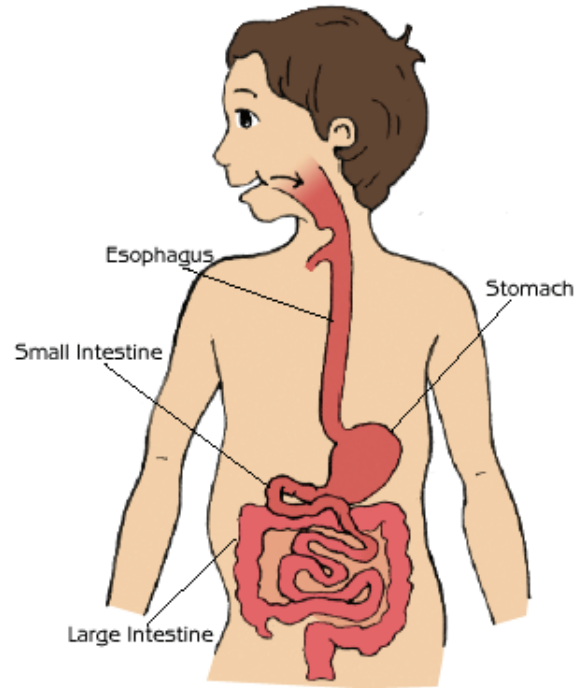
How Do Our Bodies Use Food?

Use these resources to explain in simple terms how we get the nutrients we need from foods.

What happens to food inside of us?

After snack or lunch, talk about what happens to food inside our bodies. Ask children to share their ideas. Clarify with this explanation of digestion. Illustrate it with an enlargement of the image at the right. Have on hand a piece of string 10 feet long to represent the length of the intestines of a child.

When we chew food, we are breaking it into little pieces. The pieces travel down the esophagus, which is like a pipe, to our stomach. Our stomach mixes the pieces into liquid mush. That goes to our small intestine, where it is broken down into pieces so tiny they can't be seen with just our eyes. These tiny pieces are called nutrients. They go into the blood and travel all through the body to the places where they are needed. So when we drink milk, the nutrient called calcium goes into the blood. Then calcium travels to our bones and teeth to make them hard and help them grow. The parts of food that the body does not need go into the large intestine. We get rid of that waste when we go to the bathroom.



I know where food goes!

Once children have an idea about digestion, use this activity to let them test their understanding. You need a large, empty cereal box, an enlarged copy of the child's digestive tract from this page, small (1"x1") pictures of healthful foods, magnetic tape, and a magnetic wand or other strong magnet.

Remove the top of the cereal box so a child can reach in. Attach the image to the front of the box. Mount small pictures of foods onto tagboard and glue a small piece of magnetic tape to the back. To use, one child chooses a food and places it at the mouth. A second child uses the magnet inside the box to guide the food from the mouth through the digestive track. Coach them to stop at the large intestine because now all the food is inside the body making us grow and stay healthy.