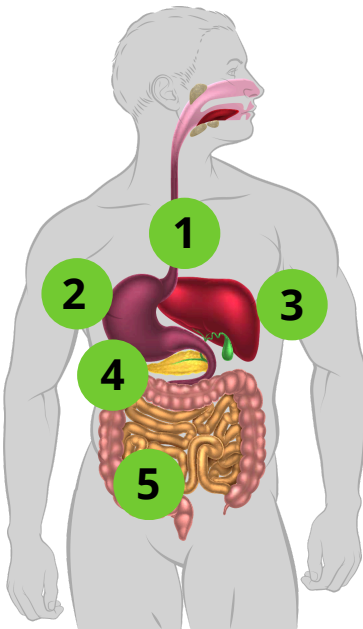


GUT INSTINCT

WHAT EFFECT DOES ALCOHOL HAVE ON YOUR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM?

When it comes to alcohol, drinking in moderation is key. We know that excessive alcohol consumption can have a negative impact on our overall health, body and mind. Here we discuss how alcohol can damage our digestive system.



1. OESOPHAGUS

Alcohol relaxes our lower oesophageal sphincter, a valve that helps prevent the acidic contents of our stomach from rising up into our oesophagus. When this happens, we can experience heartburn, which over time may lead to complications like Barrett's oesophagus, or oesophageal cancer.

2. STOMACH

Alcohol can hinder the production of the mucous that lines the stomach. Without this protective layer, the lining can become inflamed, known as gastritis. Symptoms include abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. Gastritis can lead to the development of ulcers. Alcohol, beer in particular, can cause bloating. Alcohol can disrupt the balance of bacteria in the gut, and contribute to overgrowth of a yeast (candida), both factors can increase gas production in the gut.

3. LIVER

The liver is responsible for breaking down alcohol so that it can be removed from the body. Excess alcohol can result in the release of harmful toxins that can lead to fat accumulation and scar formation, which prevents the liver from working properly. About one third of heavy drinkers develop alcoholic hepatitis, which is when the liver becomes inflamed and swollen and liver cells are destroyed. Symptoms can include jaundice, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. About 10-20% of heavy drinkers develop cirrhosis, which is when liver cells are replaced with significant scar tissue. Symptoms may not present for some time but cirrhosis can lead to liver failure and liver cancer.

4. PANCREAS

The toxins mentioned above can cause inflammation in the pancreatic ducts, which can lead to pancreatitis, which can be life threatening.

5. BOWEL

Bowel cancer risk increases significantly when two or more drinks are consumed per day. As alcohol can cause inflammation in the lining of the intestines, it can hinder the gut's ability to absorb nutrients. Some experience either diarrhoea or constipation after consuming alcohol.

KEEPING YOUR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN CHECK



Feb Fast, Dry July, and OcSober are awareness programs that encourage people to give up alcohol for the month. They provide a great opportunity to think about our own drinking habits and how our body and mind feel without alcohol.

- To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.
- The less you choose to drink, the lower your risk of harm from alcohol. It is important to have at least 2 alcohol-free days per week. There are many low alcohol options as well as alcohol-free alternatives on the market.

DR RAOUF BASSILY'S DAHL RECIPE

This is a great dish, high in fibre, full of nutrients and flavour. Enjoy with rice or roti.



INGREDIENTS -

- 2 onions chopped finely
- 2 carrots chopped finely
- 1 potato chopped finely
- 1 small zucchini chopped finely
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- 2 tsp minced ginger
- half a bunch of coriander chopped
- 1 tsp paprika powder
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 300g red lentils, rinsed in cold water
- 3 1/4 cups vegetable stock
- 2 tomatoes chopped
- salt, pepper, lime or lemon
- 1-2 tbsp olive oil
- Yoghurt, Greek or plain
- Chopped parsley

METHOD -

Heat the oil in a heavy based saucepan then saute the onions until translucent (about 2-3 mins). Add the garlic and ginger and toss for a minute. Follow with the chopped vegetables and spices and toss for a another minute.

Add the rinsed lentils and the vegetable stock to the pan, stir and bring to a boil. Then reduce to a simmer, cover with a lid and cook for a further 10-12 mins, stirring occasionally. When until the lentils have absorbed most of the liquid and are soft, your dahl is ready.

Season with salt, pepper and lime or lemon juice. Garnish with some yoghurt and chopped parsley.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF PULSES

Pulses like lentils, beans and peas are high in fibre and protein, and low in fat. One portion of pulses provides about a third of the fibre you need in an entire day. The mix of protein and fibre means that pulses are digested slowly making you feel fuller for longer.

A high fibre diet is linked to a lower risk of bowel cancer, diverticular disease, constipation, haemorrhoids, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity.