

Autogenic Training and Physical Illness

The Digestive System - Standard Exercise 5 - My Solar Plexus is warm

The Digestive System, also known as the Gastro-intestinal, Alimentary system or Gut, is one long muscular tube starting in the mouth and ending at the anus. This tube is lined with mucus membrane which secretes digestive juices: the activity of the muscle wall is peristalsis which propels food along the digestive tract one way from mouth to anus except in vomiting when it is reversed.

The Digestive tract is made up of:

- The mouth: teeth, tongue, secretion of saliva digesting starch, mastication
- Oro-pharynx: swallowing
- Oesophagus or gullet: a transit tube, no digestive function
- Stomach: the store bag, secretes pepsin and hydrochloric acid, begins digestion of protein, secretes intrinsic factor for B12 absorption
- Duodenum: pancreatic enzymes, bile, bicarbonate to neutralise acid
- Jejunum, ileum: the small intestine - a very long tube, mostly concerned with absorption; digestion continues
- Colon - the large bowel: transit of waste matter and re-absorption of water
- Rectum: stores waste matter to await evacuation
- Anus: evacuation of waste, anal sphincter under voluntary control.

Digestion is under both voluntary and involuntary control. Sympathetic activity reduces appetite, peristalsis and secretions: parasympathetic action stimulates secretions and peristalsis.

Conditions of the digestive tract

- Functional: indigestion, acid reflux, IBS, constipation
- Digestive: excess secretions, peptic ulcer, reduced secretions Sjogrens syndrome
- Malabsorption: Coeliac disease, lactose intolerance
- Inflammatory: Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis
- Malignancy: can occur at any site in the digestive tract
- Food allergies and intolerances.

The digestive tract produces sensations and awareness of its action in health; in disease the symptoms can be extreme, and this can lead to much dietary anxiety.

Eating disorders are not gastro-intestinal conditions but behaviour disorders; anorexia and bulimia can cause damage to the digestive tract.

AT has great potential for improving the functioning of the digestive tract and improving attitudes to eating

Intentional off-loading exercises and personal affirmations can be especially helpful.