

Name: _____

Your Digestive System

by Cynthia Sherwood

This may seem like a trick question, but are you bigger than a tennis court? The answer is no, of course not! But think about this fact—your intestines have a surface area about the size of a tennis court all coiled up inside your body. They fit inside of you because your large and small intestines are like a giant Slinky that scrunches up.

These organs have a giant role to play too. They are part of your digestive system. That means they break down the food you eat. Digestion begins in the mouth when you chew and swallow. From there, your food travels through the esophagus (ee-saw-fuh-gus), which connects the bottom of your throat to your stomach. Your stomach mixes up food with liquids and then dumps it all into the small intestine.

The small intestine is a very long narrow tube. Its spongy walls soak up nutrients from your food. Then those nutrients flow into your bloodstream to be carried off to other parts of your body. Some nutrients get stored until you need them and others are used right away for all the different things your body needs to work well.

Your body cannot use every single bit of the food you eat. There will always be some that needs to be changed into waste by the large intestine. From the small intestine, leftover food gets pushed into the large intestine where it is dried up and turned into feces, or poop.

If you want to keep your digestive system healthy, you should be careful about what you eat. Healthy whole grains, fruits, and vegetables all pass through your digestive system quickly and easily. They also contain fiber, which is a nutrient that helps in digestion. Your body has a harder time digesting fatty foods, so be careful how much fat is in your diet.