Digestive Health Tips:

Adapted from the American College of Gastroenterology (www.acg.gi.org)

10 Tips on Belching, Bloating, and Flatulence

1. Belching is caused by swallowed air from:
   - Eating or drinking too fast
   - Poorly fitting dentures; not chewing food completely
   - Carbonated beverages
   - Chewing gum or sucking on hard candies
   - Excessive swallowing due to nervous tension or postnasal drip
   - Forced belching to relieve abdominal discomfort

2. To prevent excessive belching, avoid:
   - Carbonated beverages
   - Chewing gum
   - Hard candies

   Activated charcoal and Simethicone may be helpful

3. Abdominal bloating and discomfort may be due to intestinal sensitivity or symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. To relieve symptoms, avoid:
   - Broccoli
   - Baked beans
   - Cabbage
   - Carbonated drinks
   - Cauliflower
   - Chewing gum
   - Hard candy

4. Abdominal distention resulting from weak abdominal muscles:
   - Is better in the morning
   - Gets worse as the day progresses
   - Is relieved by lying down

5. To prevent Abdominal distention:
   - Tighten abdominal muscles by pulling in your stomach several times during the day
   - So sit-up exercises if possible
   - Wear an abdominal support garment if exercise is too difficult

6. Flatulence is gas created through bacterial action in the bowel and passed rectally. Keep in mind that:
   - 10-18 passages per day are normal
   - Primary gases are harmless and odorless
   - Noticeable smells are trace gases related to food intake
7. Foods that are likely to form gas include:
   o Milk, dairy products, and medications that contain lactose—*If your body doesn’t produce the enzyme (lactase) to break it down.*
   o Certain vegetables—baked beans, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage
   o Certain starches—wheat, oats, corn, potatoes. Rice is a good substitute.
8. If flatulence is a concern, see your doctor to determine if you are lactose intolerant.
9. Identify offending foods. Reduce or eliminate these gas-forming foods from your diet.
10. Activated Charcoal may provide some benefit.

8 Tips on Peptic Ulcer Disease

1. Ulcers are "sores" that frequently affect the stomach and the first part of the small intestine (duodenum).
2. Bacterial infection is the most common cause of duodenal ulcers.
3. Stomach ulcers are often a side effect of pain killers and anti-inflammatory drugs used primarily to treat arthritis.
4. Alcohol ingestion, cigarette smoking, and emotional stress may also influence the development of an ulcer or interfere with its healing.
5. Upper abdominal pain is the most common symptom of ulcers, but many ulcers cause no symptoms at all.
6. Ulcers may hemorrhage (bleeding) into the gastrointestinal tract; this results in the passage of black ("tarry") stool. Very serious ulcer disease may also cause a blockage between the stomach and small intestine and this complication results in persistent vomiting. Severe pain results from the most urgent complication of ulcers - peritonitis caused by a tear through the wall of the stomach or duodenum.
7. Almost all ulcers can be treated successfully, usually without surgery. Many ulcers can be prevented.
8. Ulcer treatments include antibiotics, agents that neutralize gastric acid or reduce its secretion, and drugs that strengthen the resistance of the stomach and duodenum.

5 Tips on Swallowing and Heartburn

1. Abnormal swallowing is commonly perceived as food "sticking on the way down." If this complaint persists, it is sometimes due to a serious condition and should always prompt medical attention.
2. Swallowing difficulty may be caused by a number of different problems including:
   o Poor or incomplete chewing (possibly the result of dental problems, poorly fitted dentures, or eating too quickly)
   o Abnormal muscle contraction
   o Scar tissue from chronic inflammation
   o Infection
   o Cancer
3. Heartburn is a very common problem caused by regurgitation or reflux of gastric acid into the esophagus, which connects the mouth and the stomach.

4. Heartburn can often be eliminated by avoiding:
   - Smoking
   - Fatty food in the diet
   - Caffeine
   - Chocolate
   - Peppermint
   - Overeating
   - Bed-time snacks
   - Tight-fitting clothes that constrict the abdomen
   - Certain medications
   - Heavy lifting, straining

5. It is important to consider the possibility of heart disease before attributing any kind of chest pain to gastroesophageal reflux.

5 Tips on Nutrition and Aging

1. Nutrition plays a role in cardiovascular disease, some malignancies, adult-onset diabetes, osteoporosis, alcoholism, and recovery from major injury.

2. Malnutrition can weaken the immune system, impair healing following surgery or injury, lessen mobility, and reduce mental capabilities and function. It is common in older adults.

3. To maintain good health, total fat intake should be reduced to 30% or less of calories. Saturated fat intake should only account for 10% (one third of fat calories). Salt and alcohol intake also should be limited.

4. Dietary fat content composed primarily of monounsaturated fat (e.g., olive oil) and polyunsaturated fat (e.g., canola, corn and fish oils) may be associated with a lower incidence of cardiovascular disease.

5. Foods to be avoided include whole milk and dairy products (ice cream, cheese, butter); commercially baked goods (cookies and crackers); hot dogs, ham, and cold cuts; and oils, gravies, and salad dressing.

5 Tips on Gallstone Disease

1. Gallstones typically develop over many years, although they can form in months. Gallstones are present in about 20% of women and 10% of men over the age of 55.

2. There are two basic types of gallstones: cholesterol and pigment. Cholesterol gallstones are the most common type in the United States.

3. About 75% of gallstones do not cause symptoms. The most common symptom caused by gallbladder stones is episodic upper abdominal pain.

4. For healthy patients who have no symptoms, no therapy or change in diet is needed. Patients with uncomplicated symptomatic gallbladder stones should reduce dietary fat
and consider surgical removal of the gallbladder (cholecystectomy). An alternate approach is oral bile acid therapy. For complicated disease, gallbladder removal is warranted.

5. Patients who undergo rapid weight loss are at risk for the development of small cholesterol gallstones and may benefit from bile acid therapy. Gallstones can seldom be prevented, although a low-fat diet may provide some protective benefit.

6 Tips on Hepatitis

1. Five different hepatitis viruses have been identified: type A; type B; type C; type D, or delta virus; and type E. Type A is probably the most prevalent type of viral hepatitis worldwide, followed by types B, E, C, and D.
2. Hepatitis A and E are transmitted through fecally contaminated food or water. Other modes of transmission include needle sharing among intravenous drug abusers; sexual contact; maternal transmission; and transmission by blood transfusion.
3. A simple blood test is used to determine that a person has one or more of the different types of hepatitis.
4. Acute hepatitis is typically characterized by flu-like symptoms (including fever, headaches, fatigue, nausea and vomiting) and jaundice. Chronic hepatitis is often asymptomatic.
5. Vaccines are available to protect against hepatitis A and B. Additionally, immune globulin for hepatitis A or hepatitis B is recommended when someone has been exposed to an infected person.
6. Among the ways to care for your liver are: limiting alcohol consumption; avoiding liver-damaging drugs; practicing safe sex; avoiding use of illegal drugs; avoiding high doses of vitamins unless prescribed; avoiding tattoos and the sharing of razors; not eating raw shellfish from questionable sources; and carefully following directions for use of toxic substances (e.g., cleaning products).

4 Tips on Circulatory Disorders of the GI Tract

1. The small intestine and the colon have a relatively restricted blood supply and are frequently affected by circulatory disorders, whereas the esophagus, stomach, and rectum are well supplied with blood and are only occasionally involved in circulatory disturbances.
2. The colon is commonly affected by ischemia (reduction of blood flow to a level not permitting normal function). In most cases, symptoms subside within days and healing is seen within 2 weeks. Antibiotics and bowel rest usually suffice. In complicated disease, damaged parts of the colon must be removed surgically.
3. Acute mesenteric ischemia results from inadequate circulation of blood to the small intestine. Treatment is aimed at dilating (opening) the blood vessels with drugs and/or surgery to restore intestinal blood flow and to remove any irreversibly damaged bowel.
4. Chronic mesenteric ischemia results when blood flow to the small intestine is reduced to an insufficient level. It causes pain associated with eating. Surgery is often warranted to correct the problem.

5 Tips on Use of Medications

1. Use of medications increases with age: 80% of older Americans who live independently receive 20 or more prescriptions per year. Residents of nursing homes receive an average of 8-10 drugs per day.
2. It is important to take medications as prescribed. Reasons for not following directions include:
   - Too many drugs
   - Error due to visual or mental impairment
   - Sharing drugs
   - Changing doctors
   - Use of over-the-counter drugs
   - Sparing expense
   - Drug side effects
   - Symptoms not improving
3. See your doctor regularly to check on medications and their effect (bring your medications with you for an office visit or to an emergency room): Drug effect changes with aging. There is decreased absorption of drugs through the intestinal tract. Decreased kidney function slows drug elimination. Metabolism of drugs changes with age.
4. The effect medications have on your body will change with aging. For example: Drug action may last longer. Drugs may produce toxicity at a lower dose in mature adults than in younger adults.
5. Remember that all changes you experience are not necessarily due to aging. For example, decrease in salivary flow is due to disease or medication not due to aging.

5 Tips on Irritable Bowel Syndrome

1. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a digestive problem also known as "spastic colon" or "irritable colon."
2. IBS symptoms include:
   - Abdominal pain (colicky, periodic or continuous dull pain)
   - Erratic bowel activity; frequent constipation or diarrhea
   - Accompanying symptoms of bloating, nausea, headache, fatigue
   - Sensitivity to intestinal gas (cramping, flatulence)
3. The cause of IBS is unknown:
   - No evidence of specific disease
   - May be triggered by psychological factors or ingestion of food
4. IBS is a condition that:
Is more common in women
- Usually starts at an early age (20s and 30s) and recurs from time to time
- Rarely starts past age 55

5. Treatment of IBS includes:
- Careful explanation of the syndrome, including what it is not
- Better management of key triggers: stress and diet
- Modification of diet to reduce or exclude foods that promote gas
- Drug therapy to relieve symptoms (bulk fiber products, antispasmodics, antidiarrheals)
- Occasionally, psychiatric therapy and medication

10 Tips on Hemorrhoids

1. Hemorrhoids are masses of swollen veins in the lower rectum (internal hemorrhoids) or at the anus (external hemorrhoids).
2. Symptoms of internal hemorrhoids include:
   - Bright red rectal bleeding
   - Staining of undergarments with mucus
3. Symptoms of external hemorrhoids include:
   - Pain and itching when irritated by constipation or diarrhea
   - Difficulty with hygiene
4. Hemorrhoids are caused by:
   - Straining
   - Work strain (lifting, etc.)
   - Straining while defecating
   - Chronic constipation
   - Passing hard, dry, small stools
   - Laxative abuse
5. Do not assume rectal bleeding is from hemorrhoids. See your doctor to rule out cancer or other disease.
6. To prevent or manage hemorrhoids, increase your fiber and fluid intake. Consider adding a fiber supplement.
7. Avoid straining at stool or sitting on the toilet for a long time.
8. Clean the external rectal area gently with soap and water following stool evacuation.
9. Try a topical cream or sitz baths to reduce inflammation.
10. See your doctor if you don’t improve.

5 Tips on Inflammatory Bowel Disease

1. Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is an inflammation of the small or large intestine that may cause these symptoms:
   - Diarrhea
Rectal bleeding
- Sharp abdominal pain or cramping
- Intestinal obstruction
- Fever
  
  See your doctor if you have any of these symptoms

2. There are two types of IBD:
- Ulcerative Colitis
  - Starts in rectum and spreads upward
  - Affects men more than women
- Crohn's Disease
  - More patchy inflammation
  - Can start anywhere in the digestive tract
  - Affects women more than men

3. The cause of IBD is unknown. What is known about IBD includes the following:
- IBD is not contagious.
- IBD is not caused by diet.
- IBD is not a form of cancer.
- IBD affects young and old alike.
- IBD can usually be treated with medicine but sometimes requires surgery.

4. Diagnosis of IBD is based on:
- Family history, travel history, current medications
- Stool sample to rule out infection
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy/colonoscopy and biopsy to rule out cancer and to identify IBD
- X-ray studies

5. Treatment of IBD may include:
- Medications to reduce or eliminate inflammation
- Special diet or elemental formula diet
- Surgery

Time is critical. If you suspect IBD, call your doctor.

10 Tips on Constipation and Incontinence of Stool

1. Despite widespread belief, constipation is not necessarily a part of growing older.
2. Bowel habits are similar in both younger and older healthy people.
3. Constipation is defined as stools that are:
   - Too small
   - Too hard
   - Too difficult to pass
   - Infrequent (less than 3 per week)
4. Constipation is caused by:
   - Not enough dietary fiber or fluids
   - Medication side effects
Emotional or physical stress
Misconception about normal bowel habits
Lack of activity
Medical problems

5. How to manage mild-to-moderate constipation:
   - Gradually add dietary fiber from various sources
   - Increase fluids (water, soup, broth, juices)
   - Eat meals on a regular schedule
   - Chew your food well
   - Gradually increase daily exercise
   - Respond to urges to move your bowels
   - Avoid straining

See your doctor if these measures don't work

6. Dietary therapy (increased fiber and fluids) and fiber supplements are the preferred treatment for chronic constipation.

7. In some cases, your doctor may recommend the use of stool softeners.

8. Use of mineral oil or stimulant laxatives regularly, consult your doctor to make sure what you are using is right for you.

9. Incontinence of stool or fecal soiling is most often due to leakage around a fecal impaction. Removing the impaction will usually restore continence.

10. Incontinence of stool in healthy older people deserves full education and treatment. Treatment options include:
    - Adjustment in dietary fiber to reduce amount of stool
    - Medications to decrease stool frequency
    - Prescribed use of enemas (not soap enemas)
    - Biofeedback training
    - Surgery to restore anal function

10 Tips on Dietary Fiber

1. Keep in mind that a high-fiber diet may tend to improve:
   - Chronic constipation
   - Coronary heart disease
   - Hemorrhoids
   - Diabetes mellitus
   - Diverticular disease
   - Elevated cholesterol
   - Irritable bowel syndrome
   - Colorectal cancer

2. Try to double your daily fiber intake.
   - Average American intake: 10-15 grams per day
   - Recommended intake: 20-35 grams per day
3. Understand what fiber is, where it comes from:
   - Insoluble fiber
     - Cereals
     - Wheat/wheat bran
     - Whole grains
   - Soluble fiber
     - Brans
     - Fruit
     - Oatmeal/oat bran
     - Psyllium
     - Vegetables


5. Keep your daily fiber intake stable. Consider a fiber supplement if you:
   - Travel
   - Eat away from home often
   - Find it difficult to get enough fiber through food choices alone

6. Don't shock your system: Increase fiber levels in your diet gradually.

7. Always increase fluids (water, soup, broth, juices) when you increase fiber.

8. Add both soluble and insoluble fiber, from a variety of sources.

9. Compare fiber content of foods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grams of Fiber</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup of Rice Krispies®       1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3 cup of 100% Bran®         9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 slice of white bread        0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 slice of whole wheat bread  1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 cup white rice            0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 cup brown rice            1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl of chicken broth         0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowl of thick vegetable (minestrone) soup 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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10.

11. Choose foods high in fiber content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruits and Vegetables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fruits</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artichokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples, pears (with skin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries (blackberries, blueberries, raspberries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans (baked, black, lima, pinto)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broccoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chick-peas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentils</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parsnips Peas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
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</table>
Eating high-fiber foods is a healthy choice for most people. If you have ever received medical treatment for a digestive problem, however, it is very important that you check with your doctor to find out if a high-fiber diet is the right choice for you.

5 Tips on Diverticular Disease

1. Diverticulosis is a condition with pouch-like protrusions in the colon:
   - Rare before age 30
   - Common after age 60
   - Usually no symptoms
2. Complications of diverticulosis include:
   - Bright red rectal bleeding with clots
   - Diverticulitis
3. Ways to prevent and manage diverticular disease include:
   - Increasing dietary fiber to keep bowel movements soft
   - Avoiding stimulant laxatives
4. Diverticulitis is a serious complication in which pouches become inflamed or infected. Symptoms of diverticulitis include:
   - Pain in left lower abdomen
   - Fever
   - Sudden change in bowel habit

See your doctor immediately if you have any of these symptoms.

5. Treatment of diverticulitis may include:
   - Antibiotics
   - Special feeding
   - Surgery