

Perfect Digestion

DEEPAK CHOPRA



Penguin
Random House
EBURY PUBLISHING



CONTENTS

COVER

ABOUT THE BOOK

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALSO BY DEEPAK CHOPRA

INTRODUCTION

- 1 THE QUANTUM MECHANICS OF DIGESTION
- 2 DIGESTION AND THE AYURVEDIC DOSHAS
- 3 UNDERSTANDING YOUR DIGESTIVE TRACT: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE
- 4 HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR GUT
- 5 DIET AND THE ART OF DETERMINING WHAT TO EAT
- 6 THE ROLE OF YOUR EMOTIONS
- 7 BIOLOGICAL RHYTHMS: RIDING NATURE'S WAVES
- 8 UNDERSTANDING EXERCISE
- 9 CONSTIPATION, DIARRHEA, AND INTESTINAL GAS
- 10 OTHER GASTROINTESTINAL PROBLEMS

IN CLOSING

RECIPES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

COPYRIGHT

ABOUT THE BOOK

Deepak Chopra, eminent physician and bestselling author of *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, shows you how to:

- *Understand your digestive tract*
- *Fine-tune your diet to minimise intestinal problems*
- *Discover the relationship between your emotions and your gut*
- *Learn how biological rhythms affect your whole system*

Throughout this helpful and essential book, Deepak Chopra offers practical advice on Irritable Bowel Syndrome, constipation, diarrhoea, gaseousness and other digestive disorders which have such a distressing effect on so many people. As the world's leading exponent of mind-body medicine, Dr Chopra explains the importance of considering the body as a whole and the many useful techniques and insights which Ayurvedic medicine uses to combat these ailments - to make you feel healthier and brighter than you have for many a day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deepak Chopra is the bestselling author of twenty-four books, including *Ageless Body*, *Timeless Mind* and *The Path to Love*. He is the Director of Educational Programmes at The Chopra Center for Well Being in La Jolla, California.

OTHER BOOKS BY DEEPAK CHOPRA

Creating Health
Return of the Rishi
Quantum Healing
Perfect Health
Unconditional Life
Ageless Body, Timeless Mind
Perfect Weight
Journey into Healing
Creating Affluence
The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success
The Return of Merlin
Boundless Energy
Restful Sleep
The Way of the Wizard
Overcoming Addictions
Raid on the Inarticulate
The Path to Love
The Seven Spiritual Laws for Parents
The Love Poems of Rumi
*(edited by Deepak Chopra; translated by
Deepak Chopra and Fereydoun Kia)*
Healing the Heart
Everyday Immortality
The Lords of the Light
On the Shores of Eternity
How to Know God

Any reference to 'writing in this book' refer to the original printed version. Readers should write on a separate piece of paper in these instances.

PERFECT DIGESTION

Deepak Chopra

the complete mind-body

programme for overcoming

digestive disorders



RIDER

LONDON * SYDNEY * AUCKLAND * JOHANNESBURG



INTRODUCTION

AS A PHYSICIAN, one supremely important truth has been brought home to me again and again: That the human body is a crowning achievement of nature, a gift bestowed upon each of us to appreciate and to care for throughout our lives. But enjoyment of this gift requires a certain degree of understanding—an informed awareness of our bodies' needs that is more crucial today than ever before.

Let me explain why this informed awareness is so important now. Among the many accomplishments of American civilization, none is more impressive than the fact that virtually no one in the United States is starving to death, which was not true in centuries past and is hardly the case even today in many parts of the world. Throughout much of history, human beings had little choice but to eat whatever they could find, hunt, or grow. This had many drawbacks, but it did cause the evolution of our remarkably flexible human digestive system, which is not only capable of processing a wide variety of foods but is actually best suited to doing so.

After tens of thousands of years, the parameters of human nutrition changed quite suddenly. At least in the United States, most of us no longer have to eat whatever we can get. On the contrary, we may eat whatever we want—but what we seem most often to choose is an ever-narrowing range of foods that are mostly sweet, or high in fat content, or low in dietary fibers. Our digestive system, which evolved to deal with scarcity and variety, is now called upon to handle abundance and nutritional uniformity. In other words,

although we have enough to eat today, we're not really taking advantage of the foods available to us. We're eating too much of the wrong things, and we're often doing it in such a rush that more stress than nutrition is delivered to our bodies and our cells. While Western society has largely solved the problems of making food available, we have yet to learn how to make the choices that are best for us. In terms of learning about the foods we eat and understanding how our bodies process them, we have yet to recognize our true needs.

Although the larger purpose of this book is to bring you a more enlightened interpretation and a more comprehensive understanding of your physiology as a whole, our explicit focus here is on the gastrointestinal tract. It certainly deserves our attention. According to Ayurveda, the traditional Indian science of health, most diseases originate as an imbalance in the digestive system. In the pages ahead we look at how the gastrointestinal tract is constructed, how it works when healthy, and how to restore health when ideal functioning has been lost through imbalance or disease.

Our discussion of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract will be concerned especially with the tract's lower end, which includes the intestines and the colon. Naturally, these are not topics that most people take up in casual conversation. Yet even as far back as the time of the ancient Greeks, when the philosopher Epicurus declared that sound digestion was the basis of all human goodness, people have recognized the importance of the gastrointestinal tract. It's interesting that Epicurus, who celebrated the pleasures of good digestion (and whose name brought us the term *epicurean*), also believed that poor digestion was so morally destructive that everything possible should be done to avoid it. He himself eventually converted to a diet of water and grain in order to minimize the risk of stomachache.

When functioning as it should, your GI tract converts food into energy and nutrition to build, repair, and sustain your

body—a big job that continues every minute of every day throughout your lifetime. Over seventy years an average American’s digestive system will process about twenty-three thousand pounds—nearly twelve tons—of solid food. When you’re in a state of good health, food passes through the twenty-seven feet of digestive canals linking throat to rectum without any conscious effort on your part and without any significant discomfort. Yet comfort is by no means common to everyone. Studies show that as many as one in every three Americans experiences frequent and significant discomfort related to the lower intestinal tract. Indeed, during the course of any given day almost everyone has gastrointestinal symptoms of some kind, and studies indicate that at least 20 million Americans suffer from a well-defined constellation of symptoms known as Irritable Bowel Syndrome, or IBS.

IBS has had other names throughout the years: spastic colon, nervous stomach, mucous colitis, irritable colon, and many more. Although it is commonly referred to as “chronic colitis,” this is actually incorrect since the word *colitis* implies inflammation of the bowel, which does not exist in true IBS. The fact that Irritable Bowel Syndrome has so many names suggests that it is not really a disease at all, but a collection of signs and symptoms that have become commonplace in modern medicine. So commonplace, in fact, that more people present themselves in the offices of gastroenterologists—specialists in the GI tract—with symptoms of IBS than with any other complaint.

In this book we will consider in detail such manifestations of IBS as constipation, diarrhea, and gas. Although not generally life-threatening, these can cause a great deal of discomfort, inconvenience, worry, and even great emotional turmoil. We will also look briefly at some of the more serious problems that can afflict the gastrointestinal tract. Severe conditions such as ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s disease, and diverticulitis are beyond our primary focus here, but

familiarity with their early symptoms is vital in order to deal with them effectively.

THE QUANTUM MECHANICS OF DIGESTION

FROM A HOLISTIC point of view, understanding any aspect of the human body—whether it's digestion and elimination or the way we process sights and sounds—must begin with a view of the body as a single integrated system in which all the parts are designed to function in a unified manner.

Although the gastrointestinal tract is itself a fascinating and marvelously complex apparatus, it is still only one aspect of the intricate and often bewildering entity that is our physical self. For this reason, I believe it's appropriate to begin by offering you a new understanding of your body as a whole—one could even say a new vision of it. I believe that once you've viewed yourself from this new perspective, you will see yourself as you did before, but with an important foundation on which to build a program of truly perfect health—that is, a healthy GI tract and a healthy body overall.

The new perspective is derived from Ayurveda, so in a sense it's not really a new perspective at all, because Ayurveda is the oldest health care system known to man. Remarkably, this ancient approach to understanding the body, which has been tested and proven over thousands of years, is also completely compatible with our contemporary understanding of how nature works. In fact, Ayurveda simply uses a different terminology to express some of the most advanced ideas of molecular biology and quantum physics.