

Have you ever wanted to speak openly about a health issue but stopped yourself because you were embarrassed? Well, you're not alone. That is the case with a majority of the 20 million Canadians who suffer each year from digestive disorders.

Running from gum to bum, your digestive tract fuels your life. It is inarguably the most important system in your body. It fuels your heart, lungs and mind. It helps fight infection and illness. It impacts your mood and energy. It is the system that works every moment of every day and it needs to be protected, respected and cared for to offer you maximum health benefits.

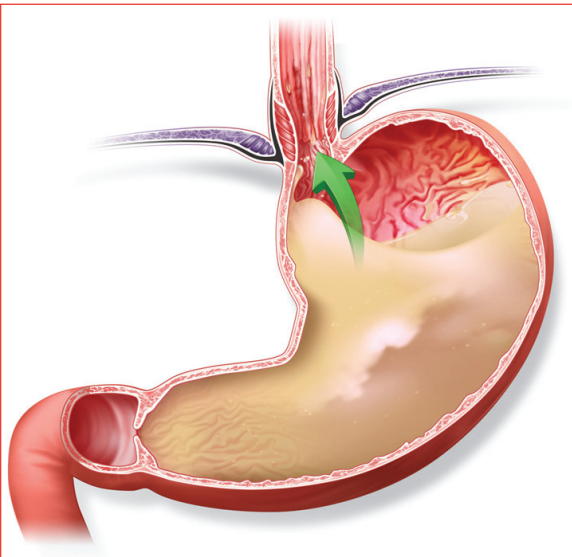
While we speak openly about breast cancer screening, most people are uncomfortable talking about colonoscopies—a safe test that can essentially stop colon cancer before it starts. Most of us will seek immediate medical attention if we think chest pain could be a heart attack but blame ourselves and put off seeing the doctor when we experience the searing pain of acid reflux.

It is not necessary for you to suffer when safe, effective treatments are available but lack of information, self-reproach, stigma, embarrassment and fear keep many Canadians from taking appropriate action. We need to break down the barriers that perpetuate silence and suffering. It's time to take control of our digestive—and overall—health and it all begins with education. So, let's take a look at just a few digestive conditions that, when managed properly, can result in a happier, healthier you.

IBS—Irritable Bowel Syndrome is a common disorder that involves problems with motility (how the bowel moves contents through our intestines) and sensitivity (how the brain interprets sensations in the bowel). The most common symptoms of IBS are abdominal pain and irregular bowel patterns that result in constipation, diarrhea, or alternating periods of both. Canada has one of the highest rates of IBS in the world with five million Canadians currently suffering. IBS affects significantly more women than men and is one of the most common causes for work and school absenteeism.

Learn more about living positively with IBS at www.CDHF.ca/IBS

GERD—Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease affects the valve between the esophagus (swallowing tube) and the stomach that results in a reverse flow of the stomach's contents into the esophagus. Most people living with GERD suffer from indigestion, acid reflux or heartburn. The pain can be so bad as to feel like it is a heart attack. On average, five million Canadians experience heartburn and/or acid regurgitation at least once each week. Twenty-five per cent of pregnant women experience daily heartburn. Recent studies show that GERD in infants and children is more common than previously thought.



GERD can be managed effectively. Learn more at www.CDHF.ca/GERD

COLON CANCER—Colon, or colorectal, cancer is a disease where cancerous cells (tumours) are present in the wall of the large intestine (colon). A mix of genetic and environmental factors can cause cells in the lining of the bowel to turn cancerous. Colon cancer can affect people of all ages but is most common after the age of 50. Each year about 22,000 Canadians are diagnosed with colon cancer and close to 9,000 of those will die. Colon cancer is almost 100 per cent preventable so getting screened can literally save your life.

Don't die from embarrassment. Learn how to protect yourself at www.CDHF.ca/ColonCancer

IBD—Inflammatory Bowel Disease causes inflammation (redness and swelling) and ulceration (sores) of the small and large intestines. It generally refers to two separate illnesses—ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. Ulcerative colitis causes ulceration and inflammation of the lining of the large bowel while Crohn's disease can occur anywhere in the digestive tract. Canada has one of the highest incidence and prevalence rates of IBD in the world with more than 230,000 Canadians living with the disease. This is a serious and often debilitating disease. Learn more at www.CDHF.ca/IBD



UNDERSTAND.

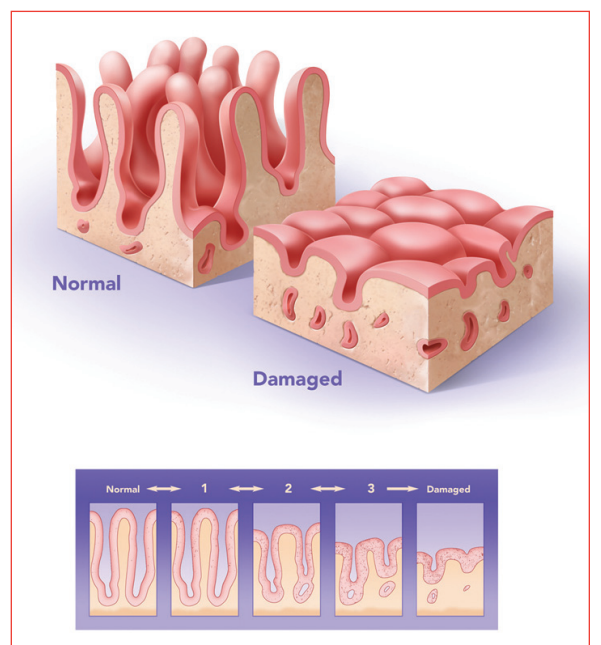
TAKE CONTROL.

LIVE BETTER.

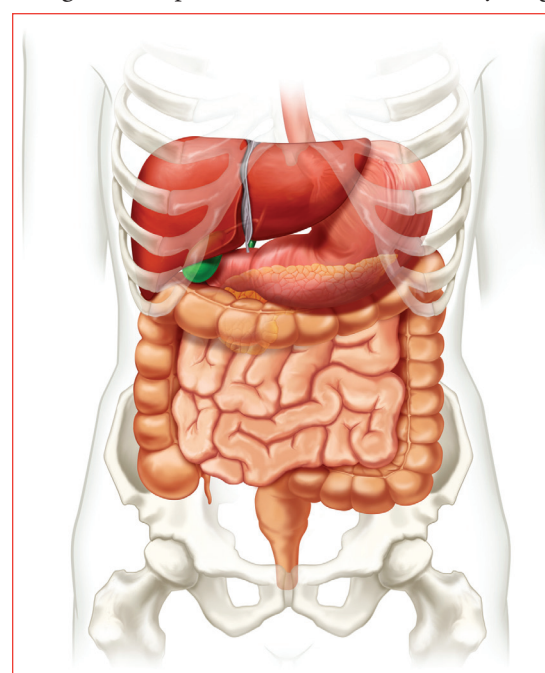
CELIAC DISEASE and GLUTEN SENSITIVITY—

Gluten, is a protein found in wheat, rye and barley that has recently been given a bad rap. For some, it can present health challenges. For most, it does not. Celiac disease is a life-long condition that results when the immune system damages the villi of the small intestine and reduces the surface area available for absorbing nutrients. More than 110,000 Canadians have been diagnosed with celiac disease. Some people, test negative for celiac disease and show no signs of the intestinal damage but react badly to eating gluten with symptoms such as abdominal pain, fatigue, and headache. Such people are said to be gluten-sensitive or gluten intolerant.

Learn more about testing for and living with celiac disease at www.CDHF.ca/Celiac



LOVE YOUR TUMMY—Digestive health is essential to overall health and well being so it's important to Love Your Tummy. Digestive discomforts such as bloating,



gas/wind and constipation affect up to 80 per cent of people. These symptoms are not normal and many can be improved through simple lifestyle changes including regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a healthy diet, and drinking more water. Take a few moments to better understand your digestive system, learn how to prevent digestive discomforts and disease, and proactively protect your digestive health by visiting www.LoveYourTummy.ca

Get to Know the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation

The CDHF exists to help you to

take control of your digestive health with confidence and optimism. Feel better—starting today by visiting www.CDHF.ca

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) invites NSTU members to sign up for our Wellness email list at Be_Well@nstu.ca

Please contact Darcell at dcromwell@staff.nstu.ca and provide your NSTU email address.

This list provides information about the EIP and other wellness topics.

For previous *The Well Teacher* articles, go to www.nstu.ca

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