

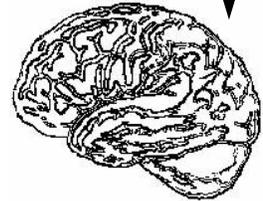
Food's Journey

The journey of food takes about 18-30 hours to complete. The digestive system, also called the gastrointestinal tract, is made up of hollow organs that serve as a passage way and processor changing the foods we eat into nutrients we use as energy. In the illustration, the journey of food is outlined in five steps.



1. The food goes in here where it is chewed into small bits. Saliva helps to soften the food for swallowing.

The brain directs activity. Messages are transmitted between the **brain** and the gut by nerve endings in the walls of the gastrointestinal tract.



2. Food goes down this tube known as the esophagus.

Muscles surround the entire G.I. Tract. They contract and relax in a wavelike motion to move things along.

Mucus is released throughout to ease food's passage.

4. Nutrients are Absorbed

The small intestine consists of about 25 feet of coiled tubing. The remaining nutrients are removed here and absorbed by the body while what is left of the chyme makes its way down to the colon.

3. Food is Processed

The food is held in the stomach until the stomach churns it (aided by muscles and enzymes) into a liquid called **chyme** ("kime"). Some nutrients are then absorbed by the stomach. The stomach slowly drips the chyme into the small intestine where it is met by additional enzymes that further break down the chyme.

5. Waste is Eliminated

The remaining chyme (which now consists of water, bacteria, fiber, dead cells, and anything our bodies cannot absorb), is passed along to the five foot long colon to be prepared for elimination. It is The Job of the colon to extract water from the chyme so that a stool can be formed and eliminated.