

A NOTE TO ADULT READERS

What are you having for dinner tonight? Pizza? Broccoli? Hamburgers? Whatever is on a child's plate, it all goes somewhere. And meal time – the starting line for the digestive process – is a great time to discuss just what happens to the green beans and how they help our bodies grow. Be forewarned, the digestive process ends in the bathroom, which might prompt some jokes from children. But who wants to make jokes when they hear fun facts such as the length of the intestines or the size of the stomach? Happy digestion.

Jim and Stacy

Kid's HEALTH QUIZ
How long are the human intestines?

- a) Three feet: 2 feet for the small intestine and 1 foot for the large intestine.
- b) Between 70 and 75 feet: 55 feet for the large intestine and the remainder the small intestine.
- c) Between 20 and 28 feet: 20 feet for the small intestine and the rest for the large intestine.

YOUR HEALTH (FOR GROWN-UPS)
Healthy Advice: Columnist Larry Csokasy leads parents out of "Oz" and into nurturing techniques for child brain development. Page 4C

The Monroe Evening News
Your Health

A kid's guide to staying healthy, fit and safe

section **C**
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for kids

Q. How many hamburgers can you eat on an empty stomach? A. None, because your stomach is never longer truly empty. ■ Q. Why is it a bad idea to write a letter on a full stomach? A. Because it's much better to write on paper. ■ Q. What do you

call half of the large intestine? A. A semi-colon.

Q. Why did the chicken cross the road? A. To prove that

even chickens have guts. ■ Q. Why won't skeletons go to scary movies? A. They have no guts. ■ Q. What kind of cake do they serve at the school cafeteria? A. Stomach-cakes. ■ Q. Why don't kids eat liver? A. They don't have the stomach for it.

You've got

Guts

GOING DOWN THE WRONG WAY

Sometimes, after the mouth turns food to mush, the mush goes down the wrong pipe – meaning, the mush is in the airway instead of the esophagus.

Normally, the body makes sure this doesn't happen. When you swallow, a small trap door closes over the breathing tube so food can safely travel down the esophagus. When food slips into the airway, you start coughing so the airway is cleared and breathing can go back to normal.

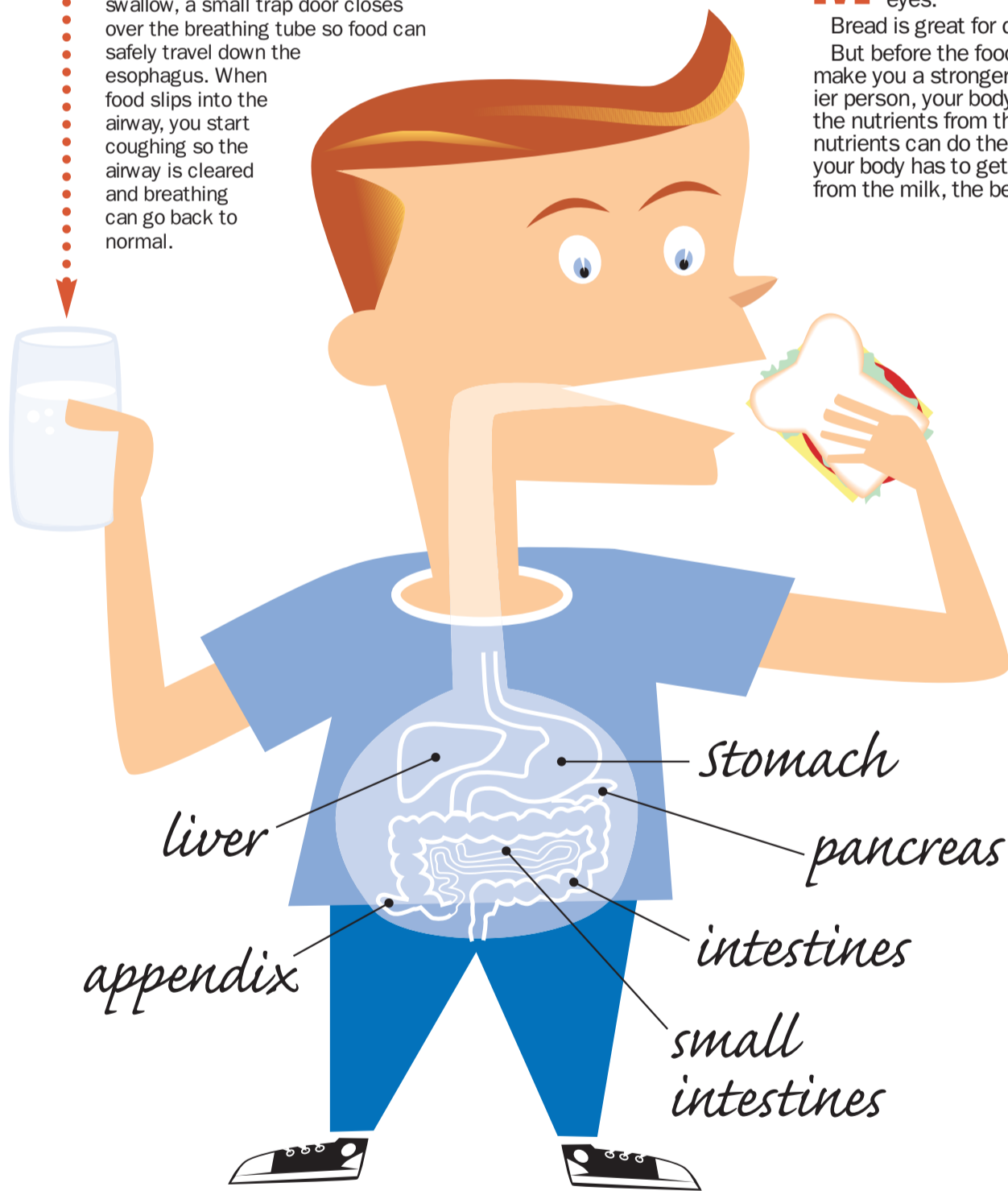
From food to nutrients

Milk makes strong bones. Carrots are good for the eyes.

Bread is great for quick energy. But before the food you eat can make you a stronger, faster, healthier person, your body has to get the nutrients from the food so the nutrients can do their jobs. That is, your body has to get the calcium from the milk, the beta-carotene

from the carrots and the carbohydrates from the bread, so the calcium can strengthen the bones, the beta-carotene can support the eyes and the carbohydrates can give you energy.

It's a long way from a juicy orange to vitamin C – a path that involves a sack about the size of your fist called the stomach and 20 to 28 feet of curving tubes

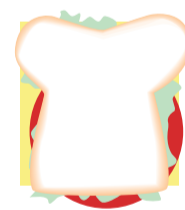


Step 1

You eat a peanut butter and banana sandwich with the crusts removed, four carrots and three celery sticks and wash it down with orange juice.

Step 2

When you swallow, the food (now mush) travels down the "food pipe," called the esophagus.



Step 3

The food enters your stomach, which is only the size of your fist. When the mush gets to the stomach, it meets up with a lot of acid and enzymes, kept in your stomach just to turn the mush into liquid.

Step 4

The liquefied mush moves into the small intestine, where the liver provides the necessary stuff (bile salts) to help the small intestine absorb fat out of the liquefied mush. The pancreas joins in by giving the small intestine plenty of digestive enzymes so fats, proteins and carbohydrates are all broken down so your body can absorb them. The small intestine finishes by absorbing as many nutrients as it can (in this case, the vitamin C from your juice, the potassium from your bananas in your sandwich and other vitamins and minerals).

Step 5

The large intestine, which actually is much shorter than the small intestine, gives the mush one last chance to provide the body with what it needs – in this case, water. This also is where feces are formed.

Step 6

What wasn't absorbed by the body is flushed away in the toilet.

WHERE'S MY APPENDIX?

Hanging off the side of your large intestine is a tiny little pouch.

It doesn't do much, although digestive juices do move through it, but we certainly could live without it – and some people do.

The pouch, called the appendix, sometimes becomes filled with digestive juices, but cannot release them back into the intestines. When it is blocked, it's called appendicitis. When a person has appendicitis, doctors remove the appendix.

DID YOU KNOW ... ?

"Gut" likely comes from an Old English word meaning "to pour." Today it means intestines and stomach – part of the digestive track. It also means courage. Everyone has guts, but do you have guts?

Kids health quiz answer: C