

# 10 Tips for a Healthy Belly

It seems you can't turn around without finding advice for getting a flat belly. Well, a flat belly would be nice—no argument there—but what will help you more in the long run is a healthy belly.

"Poor digestive health can manifest itself in a variety of ways, such as problems with bowel function (constipation/diarrhea), gas, bloating, and abdominal pain, as well as an increased risk of certain cancers—colorectal, stomach, esophageal, and oral," explains Victoria Shanta Retelny, RD, LDN, a Chicago-based dietitian and nutrition therapist. Fortunately, there are steps you can take every day to prevent these problems and help your digestive tract run more smoothly now and for years to come. Take these 10 tips for a better belly:

- 1) Try to eat at least 25 grams of fiber each day. Fiber not only helps prevent constipation but also helps keep the digestive tract running smoothly. Good sources are whole grains, beans, fruits, and vegetables.
- 2) Regularly eat yogurt with live active cultures. Yogurt contains probiotics, which, according to Retelny, "fend off harmful bacteria in the gut and keep immunity up."
- 3) Go easy on high-fat, processed, and fried foods or avoid them completely. They can slow digestion and increase the likelihood of constipation.
- 4) Eat at least two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables daily. In addition to the fiber, fruits and veggies are good sources of water, which, explains Retelny, "allows nutrients to be absorbed properly and aids in proper waste elimination."
- 5) Exercise regularly. Try to get a total of at least 30 minutes of brisk activity daily. This will keep your metabolism revved and help your digestive system keep moving.



- 6) Maintain a diet that is low in fat. "Low-fat foods ward off delayed gastric emptying, or slow emptying of food from the stomach," explains Retelny.
- 7) Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day, especially water. Inadequate water intake can lead to a sluggish digestive system, which in turn can cause bloating and constipation.
- 8) Eat slowly. Eating too quickly can cause you to swallow a lot of air, which can lead to excessive belching, as can drinking carbonated beverages and chewing gum.
- 9) Get enough sleep. According to Retelny, "A lack of sleep can cause digestive disturbances."
- 10) Avoid overeating and try eating smaller meals or snacks more frequently throughout the day. Eating too much at one sitting can cause bloating and abdominal pain. Small amounts of food keep you from getting overly hungry and overeating. This keeps the digestive system on an even keel—no highs and lows of starving, stuffed, starving, stuffed, and so on. ♣

— Heidi Reichenberger McIndoo, MS, RD, LDN

# TOP 5 VEGGIE BURGERS

If you wanted a meatless burger several years ago, you simply went to your grocer's frozen food department and picked up a box of the only variety on the market. But meatless burgers now fill one or two cases in the frozen food aisle. Whether you're craving real "burger" flavor, want something

with an Italian twist, or are looking for a Latin flair, you're bound to find something to please.

But which is the best? Certainly that depends on your palate and what you're looking for at any given moment. I've evaluated a handful of veggie burgers for nutritional content and flavor and picked my

five favorites. All that's left for you to do is remember to pick up some whole grain rolls on the way out of the store and you're on your way to a yummy veggie burger meal.

— HRM

	Calories (per burger)	Fat (g)	Fiber (g)	Protein (g)	Sodium (mg)	Pros	Cons
 Boca All American Flame Grilled	120	5	5	14	380	Most burgerlike, low fat	Stuck to pan when cooking
 Gardenburger Veggie Medley	100	2.5	5	3	380	Full of veggie flavors	Low protein
 Morningstar Farms Spicy Black Bean Burger	120	4	4	11	350	Nice flavor; had a bit of a kick	May be too spicy for some
 Morningstar Farms Grillers Prime	170	9	2	17	360	Burgerlike	Low fiber, high fat, highest calories
 Morningstar Farms Tomato & Basil Pizza Burger	120	6	3	10	280	Could really taste tomato and basil, lowest sodium	Higher in fat