

## Getting to Know: Digestive

Humans, like all other animals, need to eat food to survive. Our bodies use food for fuel. Food also contains many important nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that we need to stay healthy.

The nutrients in food are broken down, extracted, and absorbed into the bloodstream by the digestive system. *Digestion* is the process by which the body breaks down food into usable nutrients and waste products.

### *What is the purpose of the digestive system?*

The *digestive system* actually has three main functions. Its first job is to break food down into nutrients that the body can use. It then absorbs these nutrients into the bloodstream so that they can be carried to the rest of the body. Finally, it eliminates any remaining substances that cannot be used by the body. This material is excreted as waste.



Fruits like apples provide natural sugars and other nutrients that your body needs.



### **Misconception 1:** *Is it true that it takes seven years for the body to digest gum?*

It does not take seven years to digest gum. Gum travels through the digestive system just like any other solid. Any nutrients in the gum are extracted and absorbed, and the rest is eliminated as waste.

### *Which organs make up the digestive system?*

The structure of the digestive system consists of organs that help break down food, absorb nutrients, and eliminate wastes. All of the organs in the digestive system serve at least one of these functions.

Organs that contribute to the breakdown of food include the mouth, esophagus, and stomach as well as the pancreas and gallbladder. Nutrients are absorbed through the small intestine, and remaining waste is eliminated through the large intestine and rectum.

