

# Introduction

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This comprises organs that break down and digest food, and remove unabsorbed wastes from the body. Its main feature is the alimentary canal (gut) measuring about 30ft (9m) in length.

**Mouth cavity** Here teeth, tongue, salivary glands, and other structures process food for swallowing.

**Esophagus** This is the alimentary canal between the lower pharynx (throat) and stomach. It moves food to the stomach by peristalsis.

**Stomach** This enlargement of the alimentary canal churns, disinfects, and starts digesting food.

**Sphincters** These rings of smooth muscle can close the pylorus (junction of stomach and duodenum) and the anus.

**Digestive juices** Saliva, gastric, small-intestine, and pancreatic juices contain enzymes for digesting specific food substances.

**Small intestine** This convoluted tube about 21ft (6.5m) long connects stomach and large intestine. Subdivisions (from the stomach) are duodenum, jejunum, and ileum. Most digestion occurs in the small intestine.

**Large intestine** Also called the colon, this is a broad tube about 5ft (1.5m) long, extending from ileum to rectum. Its main subdivisions are the cecum, the ascending, transverse, and descending colon, and the sigmoid flexure.

**Appendix** This vestigial structure is a blind, narrow tube projecting from the cecum.

**Rectum** This tube extends from the sigmoid flexure and ends at a narrow orifice, the anus.

**Liver** The body's largest solid organ, this lies in the upper abdomen. Its complex chemical activities include secreting the emulsifying substance bile, and storing vitamins and glycogen.

**Gall bladder** This sac stores bile, releasing it into the duodenum.

**Pancreas** This endocrine gland secretes insulin and pancreatic juice into the duodenum.