**Chronic Congestive Heart Failure link with Diarrhea**

Heart disease is still the leading cause of death in seniors, and a number of studies have shown that there’s a strong correlation between the health of your heart and the health of your digestive system. That means that even though we often focus on heart health, it’s just as important that you know how to take care of your digestive system if you want to optimize your overall well-being.

**HOW DOES HEART DISEASE AFFECT THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM?**

Your heart pumps blood to every organ in the body – including the digestive system. Heart disease, plaque or other conditions that interfere with the heart’s ability to do its job can have a ripple effect on the rest of your body.

Your digestive system usually gets between [20-25%](https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/angina-in-the-intestines-mirrors-what-happens-in-the-heart) of the oxygenated blood pumped by the heart, with this amount doubling after you eat and your body needs to work to digest the meal. Unfortunately, if your heart isn’t able to send enough blood to your stomach, it can cause severe issues – from sharp abdominal pain to diarrhea, nausea or vomiting after a meal.

This can also create a feedback loop, since it’s not uncommon for people experiencing these issues to avoid eating, causing rapid and unhealthy weight loss and making it hard for them to maintain the activity they need to strengthen their overall health!

The reverse is also true – the digestive system can also affect the heart. When someone has an inflammatory bowel disease, the intestinal barrier is affected, no longer protecting the rest of your body from dangerous bacteria. This bacteria, once entering the blood stream, can contribute to heart conditions and even chronic heart failure.

That’s why it’s important that you speak with your doctor about any recurring digestive or stomach issues as soon as possible.

**WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF AGING ON THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM?**

40% of older adults experience one or more issues with their digestive system, including:

* Constipation
* Ulcers
* Diverticular Disease
* Polyps
* Gastroesophageal reflux disease

Some of these stomach problems and other digestive issues are caused by a direct result of aging, while others may be related to other conditions, such as some medications, decreased activity, not drinking enough water, or a medical condition such as dementia, stroke or Parkinson’s disease.  While some conditions may primarily cause discomfort, they can also have a severe impact on your health – so it’s critical that you take steps to prevent digestive system issues.

**HOW TO PREVENT DIGESTIVE SYSTEM DISEASES.**

There are a number of ways you can help keep your digestive system in good working order.

**Increased activity** – also good for the heart – can help prevent constipation and even can reduce your risk of colon cancer. Thirty minutes of exercise five days a week is a good goal to aim for.

Constipation can also be prevented or alleviated by **eating more fiber** and making sure that you **drink plenty of fluids**. Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans are all good, natural sources of fiber you should try to incorporate into your diet.

Be proactive about your health with your doctor – be sure to address any concerns up front. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about side effects of any medications you might take – many pain killers, even over the counter ones, can irritate the stomach. Work with your doctor to find the best possible dosage and be sure to take medications with food when required to avoid stomach irritation.

If you still have questions, feel free to reach out to our staff at Dixon Rehabilitation and Health Care. Give us a call or schedule your [personal consultation](https://dixonbytutera.com/quoter/) today.