



I. Are You Taking Care of Your Digestive Tract?

People need to think about the health of their digestive tracts. There are symptoms we need to notice, as well as habits we need to practice in order to protect it. The following assessment is designed to help you examine your habits and symptoms associated with the health of your digestive tract. The second Looking Further section explained why these habits are important to examine. Put a Y in the blank to the left of the question to indicate yes and an N to indicate no.

- _____ 1. Are you currently experiencing greater than normal stress and tension?
- _____ 2. Do you have a family history of digestive tract problems (e.g., ulcers, hemorrhoids, recurrent heartburn, constipation)?
- _____ 3. Do you experience pain in your stomach region about 2 hours after you eat?
- _____ 4. Do you smoke cigarettes?
- _____ 5. Do you take aspirin frequently?
- _____ 6. Do you have heartburn at least once per week?
- _____ 7. Do you commonly lie down after eating a large meal?
- _____ 8. Do you drink alcoholic beverages more than two or three times per day?
- _____ 9. Do you experience abdominal pain, bloating, and gas about 30 minutes to 2 hours after consuming milk products?
- _____ 10. Do you often have to strain while having a bowel movement?
- _____ 11. Do you consume less than 9 (women) or 13 (men) cups of a combination of water and other fluids per day?
- _____ 12. Do you perform physical activity for less than 60 minutes or more on most or all days of the week (e.g., jog, swim, walk briskly, row, stair climb).
- _____ 13. Do you eat a diet relatively low in fiber (recall that significant fiber is found in whole fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds, whole-grain breads, and whole-grain cereals)?
- _____ 14. Do you frequently have diarrhea?
- _____ 15. Do you frequently use laxatives or antacids?

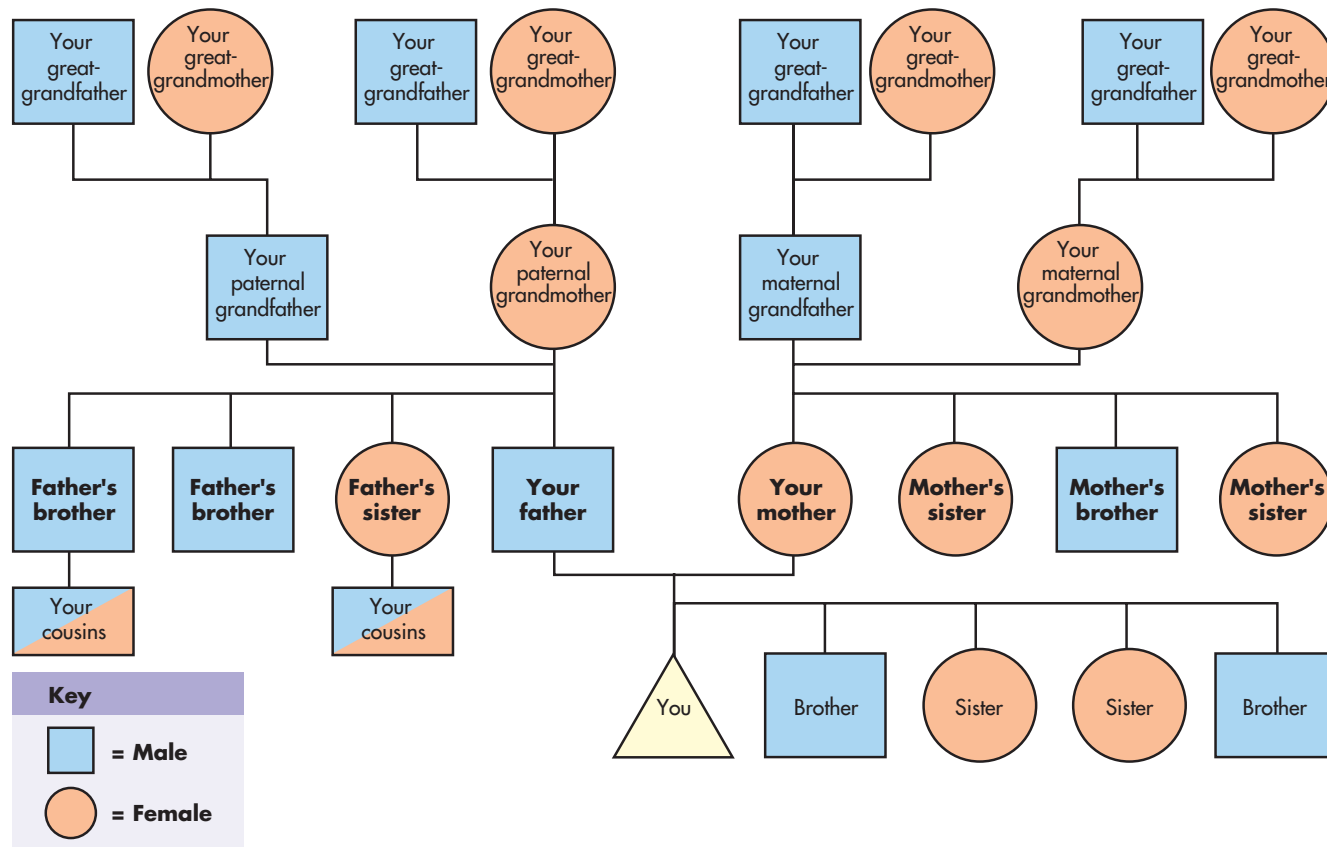
Interpretation

Add up the number of yes answers you gave and record the total in the blank to the right. _____

If your score is from 8 to 15, your habits and symptoms put you at risk for experiencing future digestive tract problems. Take particular note of the habits to which you answered yes. Consider trying to cooperate more with your digestive tract.



II. Create Your Family Tree for Health-Related Concerns



Adapt this diagram to your own family tree. Under each heading, list year born, year died (if applicable), major diseases that developed during the person's lifetime, and cause of death (if applicable). Figure 3-3 provides one such example.

Note that you are likely to be at risk for any diseases listed. Creating a plan for preventing such diseases when possible, especially those that developed in your family members before age 50 to 60 years, is advised. Speak with your physician about any concerns arising from this exercise.