

# Chew on this!

Posted on: February 2nd 2017

Lately, I've been obsessed with chewing.

It's the thought of chewing that's got my attention, not the practice. The practice is what I'm hoping to inspire today—in myself, and hopefully in you too.

I often say that 'we're not just what we eat, but how our body processes what we eat'. In this way, we are what we can digest, absorb and utilize.

We are, in part, the health of our organs and body systems.

It's curious to me how we can overlook the importance of the many chemical reactions in our bodies and particularly in our digestive systems. There are those that are triggered by the food choices we make, and there are those affected by the strength and efficiencies of our organs.

When my husband, Isamu, was diagnosed with a brain tumor in April of 2000, we tried everything we could think of to promote his health and allow his body to focus attention where it was needed most. The most gratifying of our new routines were the places where we could make immediate change and feel the difference. I created organic, healthy and delicious meals. He adopted the conscientious practice of *chewing*.

Not just chewing, but chewing *a lot*.

Isamu chewed and chewed.

With his quiet etiquette and concrete determination, he chomped every bite thoroughly.

Every meal became a feast. It was an opportunity to savor and delight in the taste and aroma of his grub. I don't know if he was counting to 50 or 100 during his ruminations, or if the practice just became ingrained once he set his mind to it.

## **Digestion is one of the essential jobs of the human body.**

In fact, digestion is a cascade of actions where the success of each event is considerably dependent on the completion of the prior action. While some of the initial steps involved in digestion are chemical, one of the first is mechanical.

*This is chewing.*

When you chew, your food breaks down and signals hormones, enzymes, and gastric juices to initiate the process of digestion. The longer your food stays in this stage of dissolve, in this mechanical and chemical decomposition that occurs within your mouth, the easier digestion is on the rest of your body.

Not only is your food dissected into smaller and smaller bits by your teeth, but your saliva produces enzymes that further disassemble your food's molecules. It also contains softening agents to allow the food to be molded into a ball (called a bolus) for swallowing.

In addition, you also have more time to chemically alert the rest of your digestive system to start its engines!

Well-chewed food glides easily through the esophagus and into the stomach.

Dried and unchewed food has a more stilted journey through the entire digestive and metabolic chain reaction.

**Chewing alone can eliminate bloating, gas and abdominal pain.**

Believe it or not, chewing is a cheap and easy way to increase the health and efficacy of the digestive system and benefit overall health. By freeing up the energy of the digestive system, what else might you have energy to accomplish?

This month I'll be practicing my chewing!

I hope you'll join me.

**ACTION STEPS: CHEWING!**

- Learning to chew well involves the tongue. The tongue has the important role of keeping the food in my mouth.
- Once the tongue is well-practiced at the art of dissuading the chunky swallow, I'll take 7-10 days of counting to 4 – 50 chews for each bite.
- If the task feels daunting, I'll try this for only one meal of the day. Yet I'm going to make a conscious effort to savor and chew even those meals that are eaten on the run, between clients or on the way to my son's piano lesson after the carpool drop-offs.
- After several weeks, I'm hoping this chewing will become habit. I plan to tune in to the feel of the fully chewed food in my mouth and how I feel after these meals.

If you do the same, let me know.

Cheers and chewing to your healthy digestion!