

The Digestive System: Chapati's Great Adventure

Read the story aloud together, then try the activities.

Name _____

Class _____

Date _____

At lunchtime, Zoya tore off a piece of chapati and popped it into her mouth. "Welcome aboard!" boomed a voice. It was Molar, one of her back teeth. "First stop: the mouth. Time to chop!" Crunch, crunch — the teeth ground the chapati into soft little pieces, while the tongue rolled them around and mixed them with saliva. "Saliva starts breaking down the starch in you already," said Molar. "That's why chapati tastes a little sweeter the longer you chew."

With a big gulp, the soft ball of food slid to the back of the throat. A little flap called the epiglottis closed over the windpipe, so the food went down the right tube — the food pipe, or oesophagus. "I'm falling!" squeaked the chapati. "Not falling," said a voice from the walls. "Squeezing!" Rings of muscle pushed the food down in waves. "We work even if you swallow upside down," the oesophagus said proudly.

Splosh! The food landed in the stomach — a stretchy, muscly bag. The stomach squeezed and churned for a few hours, mixing the food with strong juices, including acid, until the chapati was a thick, soupy mush. "Don't worry," said the stomach. "My walls have a coating of slime, so my juices don't hurt me."

Next, a little at a time, the mush squirted into the small intestine — a long, coiled-up tube. In a grown-up it is about six metres long, longer than a car, folded up neatly in the belly. Juices from the liver and pancreas joined in and broke the food into the tiniest bits of all. The inside walls were covered in millions of tiny finger-like bumps called villi. Through them, the nutrients from the chapati passed into the blood, to be carried all around Zoya's body — to her legs for running, her brain for thinking and her bones for growing.

What was left travelled on into the large intestine, which is wider but shorter. "My job is to soak up water," it said, "so Zoya doesn't dry out." Slowly, the leftovers that the body couldn't use became firmer and firmer.

A day or so later, those leftovers — which used to be a bit of chapati — left Zoya's body when she went to the toilet. Zoya washed her hands and ran outside to play, full of energy. She had no idea that her lunch had just been on the most amazing journey of its life.

1. Match each word to its meaning

Write the letter next to each word.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Digestion ____ | A. the tube from your throat to your stomach. |
| 2. Saliva ____ | B. the flap that stops food going down your windpipe. |
| 3. Oesophagus ____ | C. the long tube where nutrients pass into the blood. |
| 4. Epiglottis ____ | D. tiny finger-like bumps inside the small intestine. |
| 5. Small intestine ____ | E. the useful parts of food that help us grow and give us energy. |
| 6. Villi ____ | F. the wider tube that takes back water from leftovers. |
| 7. Nutrients ____ | G. breaking food down so the body can use it. |
| 8. Large intestine ____ | H. the watery liquid in your mouth that softens food. |

2. Number the chapati's journey in order (1-5).

- [] Food pipe (oesophagus)
- [] Stomach
- [] Small intestine
- [] Large intestine
- [] Mouth

3. Answer the questions

1. What two things does the mouth do to food?

2. How does food get from the mouth to the stomach?

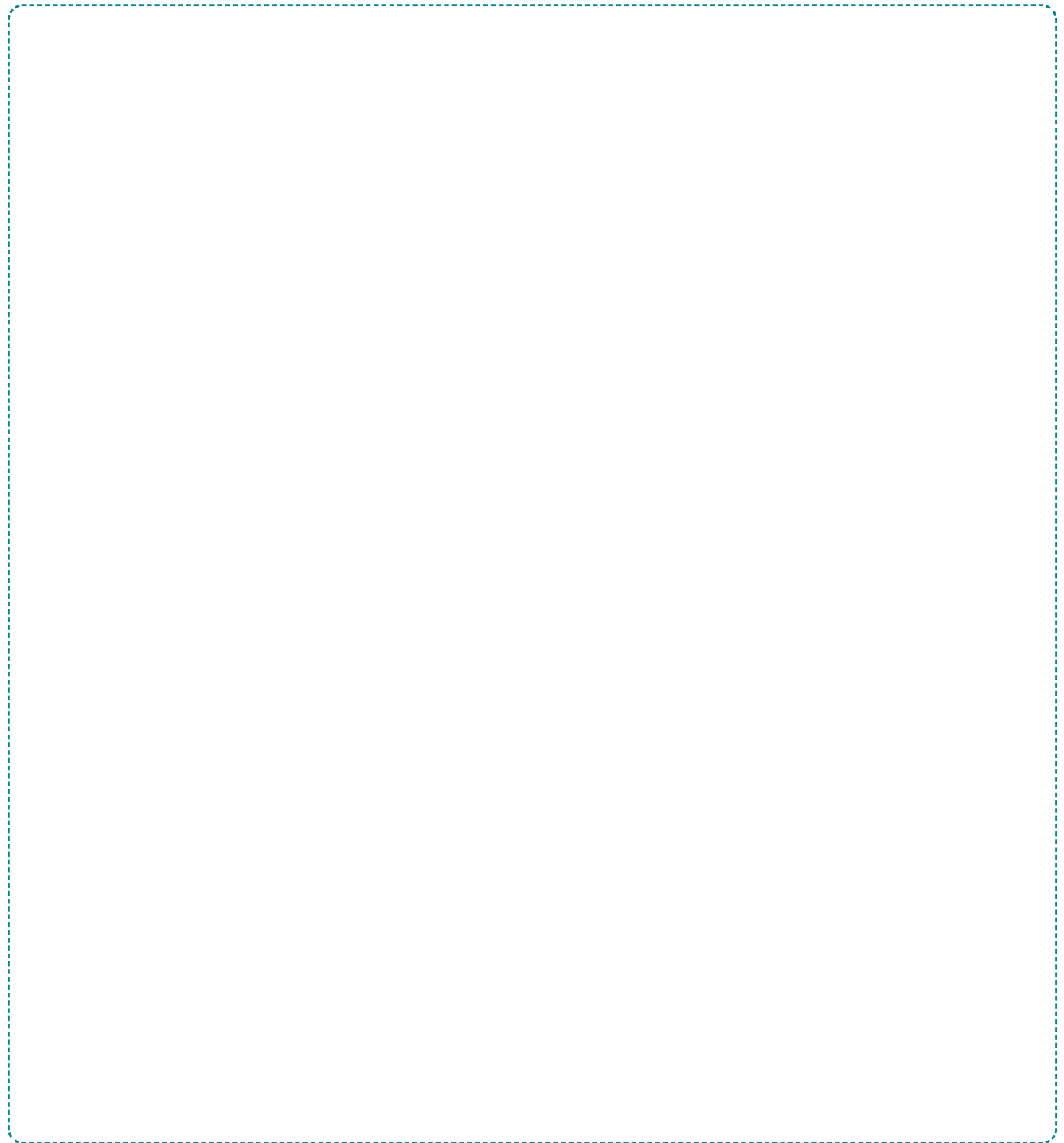
3. Why doesn't the stomach's strong acid hurt the stomach?

4. Where do the nutrients get into the blood?

5. What is the large intestine's main job?

4. Draw and label

Draw the journey of food through the body. Label: mouth, food pipe, stomach, small intestine, large intestine.

A large, empty rectangular area defined by a dashed teal border, intended for a child to draw and label the digestive system.

Answer key (for teachers and parents)

On its own page so you can leave it out when printing for children.

1. 1-G 2-H 3-A 4-B 5-C 6-D 7-E 8-F

2. 1. Mouth 2. Food pipe (oesophagus) 3. Stomach 4. Small intestine 5. Large intestine

3.1 The teeth chew it into small pieces and saliva softens it and starts breaking it down.

3.2 Muscles in the food pipe squeeze it down in waves.

3.3 Its walls have a protective coating of slime (mucus).

3.4 Through the walls of the small intestine, through the villi.

3.5 To take back water from what is left.