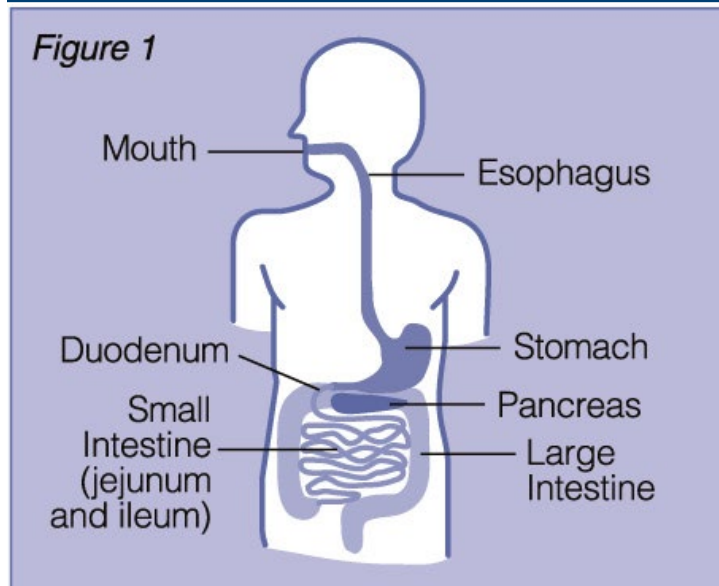

Normal Digestive Process



Digestion begins when you put food in your mouth. The pieces of food get smaller by chewing and mixing with saliva. This process prepares the food for swallowing.

When swallowed, food moves through the esophagus (e-sof-a-gus) to the stomach. In the stomach, it is thinned and mixed with enzymes (en-zimes).

After the food mixture is right, the stomach lets the food pass into the small intestine.

The first part of the small intestine is called the duodenum (doo-o-de-num). In the duodenum, bile and pancreatic juices are added to the food mixture. These help digestion. Most of the food mixture is digested and absorbed in the duodenum. Important nutrients such as magnesium, calcium, and iron are also absorbed here.

The part of the food mixture that remains is passed into the jejunum (ja-ju-num). In the jejunum many vitamins are absorbed as well as the food sugars. The last part of the small intestine is called the ileum (il-e-um). In the ileum, proteins, fats, cholesterol, vitamin B12, and fat-soluble vitamins are absorbed.

The next segment involved in the digestive process is the large intestine, which is made up of the colon and rectum. Most of the remaining fluid in the food mixture is absorbed in the colon. Sodium and potassium are also absorbed with the fluid. The large intestine provides temporary storage for the waste products of digestion. The rectum and anus control bowel movements.