THE DIGESTIVE PROCESS

Everything you eat – from a healthy salad to a slice of pizza – goes through the same basic process once you eat it. That process provides your body with the energy and nourishment it needs to survive. How does it work?

KIDS DISCOVER

HOW DOES THE BODY USE NUTRIENTS?

Most digested food particles, including what you drink, are absorbed through the small intestine. But your body doesn't use every single nutrient in the same way.

Carbohydrates

Produce energy

Fibers

Stabilize blood sugar, promote a healthy digestive system

Proteins

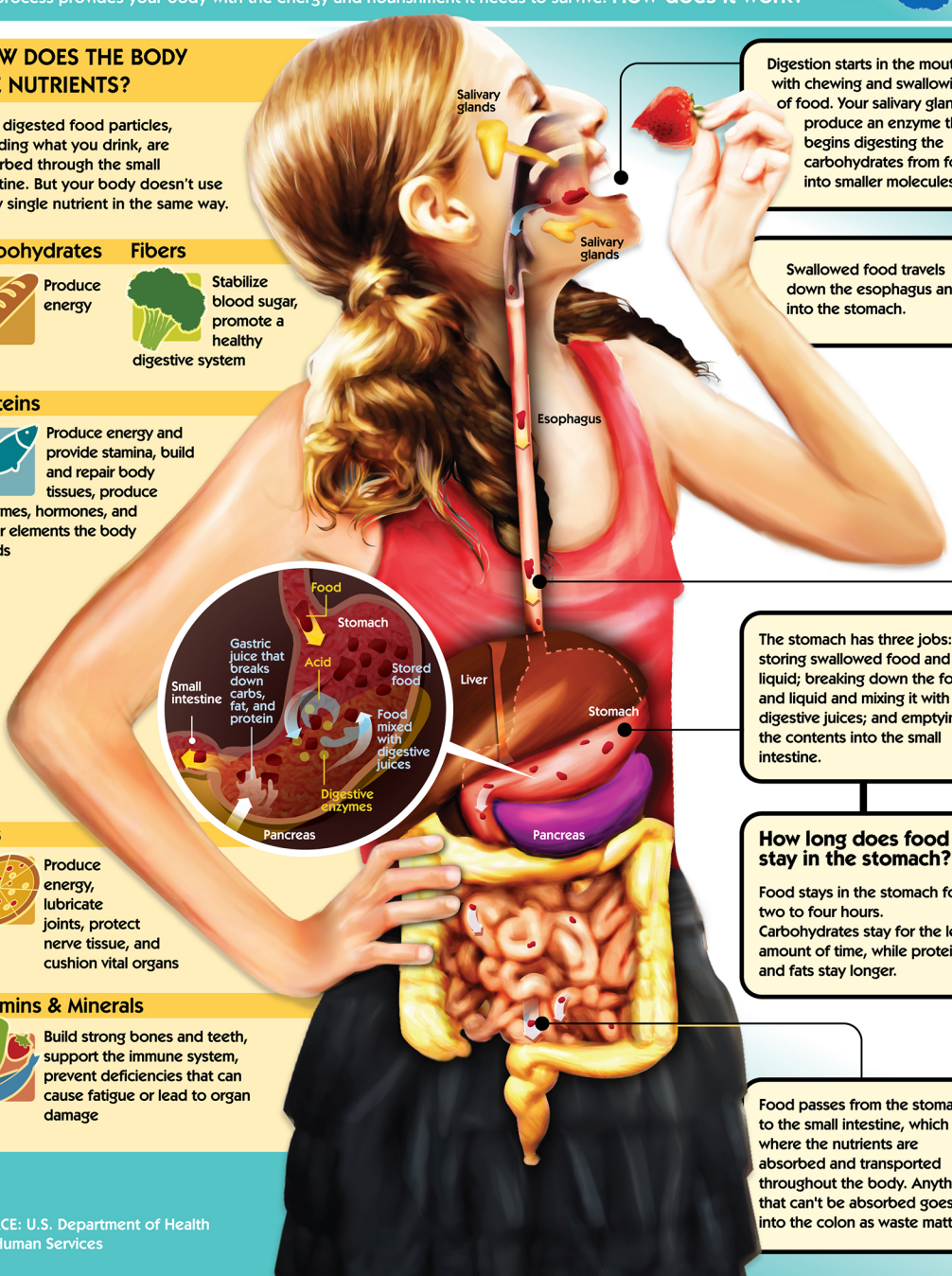
Produce energy and provide stamina, build and repair body tissues, produce enzymes, hormones, and other elements the body needs

Fats

Produce energy, lubricate joints, protect nerve tissue, and cushion vital organs

Vitamins & Minerals

Build strong bones and teeth, support the immune system, prevent deficiencies that can cause fatigue or lead to organ damage



Digestion starts in the mouth with chewing and swallowing of food. Your salivary glands produce an enzyme that begins digesting the carbohydrates from food into smaller molecules.

Swallowed food travels down the esophagus and into the stomach.

The stomach has three jobs: storing swallowed food and liquid; breaking down the food and liquid and mixing it with digestive juices; and emptying the contents into the small intestine.

How long does food stay in the stomach?

Food stays in the stomach for two to four hours. Carbohydrates stay for the least amount of time, while proteins and fats stay longer.

Food passes from the stomach to the small intestine, which is where the nutrients are absorbed and transported throughout the body. Anything that can't be absorbed goes into the colon as waste matter.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services