

chapter 14 the digestive system and body metabolism

answer key

Published: September 27, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Chapter 14: The Digestive System and Body Metabolism – A Comprehensive Answer Key

Welcome to the definitive guide on Chapter 14 of the standard biology curriculum, where the intricate world of digestion meets the dynamic processes of metabolism. Whether you're a student tackling a midterm, a teacher preparing a lesson plan, or a curious learner seeking deeper insight, this article delivers a thorough overview of the digestive system, explores how nutrients are converted into energy, and provides a meticulously crafted answer key for the most common exam questions. By weaving together clear explanations, real world examples, and practical study tips, we aim to make complex concepts accessible while staying firmly rooted in the core material of Chapter 14.

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Overview of Chapter 14

Chapter 14 bridges the gap between the mechanical act of eating and the biochemical transformations that sustain life. It begins by outlining the **anatomical layout** of the gastrointestinal tract, then delves into the **mechanisms of digestion**, and finally explores how the body utilizes nutrients through metabolic pathways. The chapter emphasizes the interdependence of the digestive system and metabolism, illustrating how disruptions in one can ripple through the other. Key learning objectives include identifying the roles of digestive organs, describing the processes of macronutrient breakdown, and explaining how hormones coordinate digestion and energy homeostasis.

Digestive System Anatomy

Major Organs and Their Functions

The human digestive system is a coordinated chain of organs that transform food into absorbable molecules. Below are the primary components and their essential roles:

- Oral Cavity – Initiates digestion through chewing (mechanical) and salivary enzymes (chemical).
- Pharynx & Esophagus – Conduits that propel food via peristalsis to the stomach.
- Stomach – Acidic environment and pepsin enzyme break down proteins.
- Small Intestine – Site of most nutrient absorption; lined with villi and microvilli to maximize surface area.
- Large Intestine – Reabsorbs water and electrolytes, forming feces.
- Accessory Organs – Liver (bile production), pancreas (digestive enzymes and insulin), gallbladder (stores bile).

Microscopic Adaptations for Efficiency

Every organ is specialized at the cellular level to optimize digestion:

1. Villi and Microvilli – Finger like projections and their brush border increase absorptive area by up to 600 times.
2. Enterocytes – Intestinal cells equipped with enzymes such as lactase and sucrase to finalize carbohydrate digestion.
3. Paneth Cells – Secrete antimicrobial peptides protecting the gut lining.

Mechanical and Chemical Digestion

Mechanical Processes

Mechanical digestion physically breaks food into smaller particles, increasing the surface area for enzymes to act upon. Key mechanisms include:

- Chewing (mastication) – Uses teeth and tongue to mix food with saliva.
- Peristaltic waves – Coordinated muscle contractions that move chyme through the GI tract.
- Segmentation in the small intestine – Mixes contents to enhance contact with absorptive surfaces.

Chemical Processes

Chemical digestion involves enzymatic and hormonal actions that convert complex macronutrients into simple molecules:

- Proteins – Hydrolyzed by pepsin in the stomach and trypsin, chymotrypsin in the small intestine.
- Carbohydrates – Broken down by amylase (salivary & pancreatic) into maltose, then by brush border enzymes into glucose.
- Fats – Emulsified by bile salts; lipase from pancreas hydrolyzes triglycerides into fatty acids and monoglycerides.

Nutrient Absorption and Transport

Transport Mechanisms

Absorption occurs primarily in the small intestine, utilizing three main processes:

1. Passive Diffusion – Small molecules like water and simple sugars move along concentration gradients.
2. Facilitated Diffusion – Carrier proteins transport glucose and amino acids without energy expenditure.
3. Active Transport – Requires ATP; crucial for sodium glucose co transport (SGLT1) and amino acid uptake.

Post Absorption Processing

Once absorbed, nutrients enter the portal circulation to the liver, where they undergo:

- Glucose !' glycogen storage or gluconeogenesis.
- Amino acids !' protein synthesis or urea cycle.
- Fatty acids !' re esterification into triglycerides or ketone body production.

Body Metabolism Basics

Catabolism vs. Anabolism

Metabolism is the sum of all chemical reactions in the body. It is divided into two complementary processes:

- Catabolism – Breakdown of macronutrients to release energy (ATP).
- Anabolism – Use of energy to build complex molecules and tissues.

Key Metabolic Pathways

Central metabolic routes include:

1. Glycolysis – Cytoplasmic breakdown of glucose to pyruvate, yielding 2 ATP and 2 NADH.
2. Citric Acid Cycle (Krebs Cycle) – Mitochondrial oxidation of acetyl CoA, producing NADH, FADH₂, and GTP.
3. Oxidative Phosphorylation – Electron transport chain generates ~30 ATP per glucose.
4. Beta Oxidation – Fatty acids are converted to acetyl CoA for the citric acid cycle.
5. Pentose Phosphate Pathway – Generates NADPH for biosynthetic reactions.

Energy Balance and Metabolic Pathways

Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)

BMR represents the energy required to maintain vital functions at rest. Factors influencing BMR include age, sex, body composition, and hormonal status. Understanding BMR is essential for calculating total daily energy expenditure (TDEE).

Metabolic Flexibility

The body's ability to switch between fuel sources (glucose vs. fatty acids) is known as metabolic flexibility. It is influenced by:

- Insulin sensitivity.
- Physical activity level.
- Dietary composition.

Hormonal Regulation of Digestion and Metabolism

Key Hormones

Several hormones orchestrate digestion and metabolic homeostasis:

- Gastrin – Stimulates gastric acid secretion.
- Secretin – Promotes bicarbonate release from pancreas.
- Cholecystokinin (CCK) – Signals gallbladder contraction and pancreatic enzyme release.
- Insulin & Glucagon – Regulate blood glucose levels.
- Leptin & Ghrelin – Control appetite and energy balance.

Feedback Loops

Digestive hormones often operate in feedback loops. For example, high luminal fat stimulates CCK, which slows gastric emptying and promotes bile release, optimizing fat digestion.

Common Digestive Disorders

Malabsorption Syndromes

Conditions such as celiac disease and lactose intolerance result from impaired nutrient absorption. Symptoms include diarrhea, bloating, and nutrient deficiencies.

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

GERD arises when the lower esophageal sphincter fails to prevent stomach acid from refluxing into the esophagus, leading to heartburn and mucosal damage.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

IBD, encompassing Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, involves chronic inflammation of the GI tract, causing abdominal pain, bleeding, and malnutrition.

Effective Study Strategies

Active Recall and Spaced Repetition

Testing yourself on key concepts and revisiting material at spaced intervals strengthens memory retention.

Concept Mapping

Visual diagrams linking organs, enzymes, and metabolic pathways help in understanding complex interactions.

Practice with Sample Questions

Applying knowledge to realistic scenarios cements understanding and reveals gaps.

Answer Key – Sample Questions

Question 1: What is the primary site of carbohydrate absorption?

Answer: The small intestine, specifically the

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