

## Dr. Henry G. Bieler's Lines of Defense Against Disease

By David L. Duffy, MD

In the digestive process food is broken down into simple sugars, fats, amino acids, vitamins, and minerals. Absorption takes place in the small intestine. The salivary glands make amylase which digests starches into simple sugars. The stomach secretes hydrochloric acid and pepsin. The pancreas secretes bicarbonate which neutralizes the stomach acid. The pancreas also secretes enzymes which digest protein, starch, and fat. The liver secretes bile which contains bile salts. Bile salts interface between water and fat.



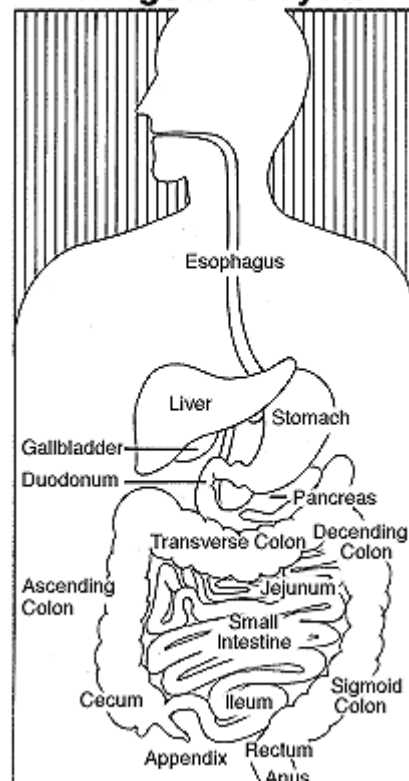
The broken down sugars, fats, and amino acids are absorbed by the small intestine. The colon contains the undigested food mixed with colonic bacteria. As water is absorbed by the colon the fecal material becomes more concentrated. When it arrives in the sigmoid colon the person is prompted to move his bowels.

Through the absorption of sugar, fat, and amino acids the body is nourished. Digestion is simplest when one eats one food at a time. This is called a "mono-diet". When many foods are eaten together the digestive process is more complicated. Depending on what is eaten and the strength of the person's digestion many nutrients are absorbed. However, when the food exceeds the person's digestive capacity, undigested food remains unabsorbed and is broken down by intestinal bacteria. This is the putrefaction process which produces decayed, smelly byproducts.

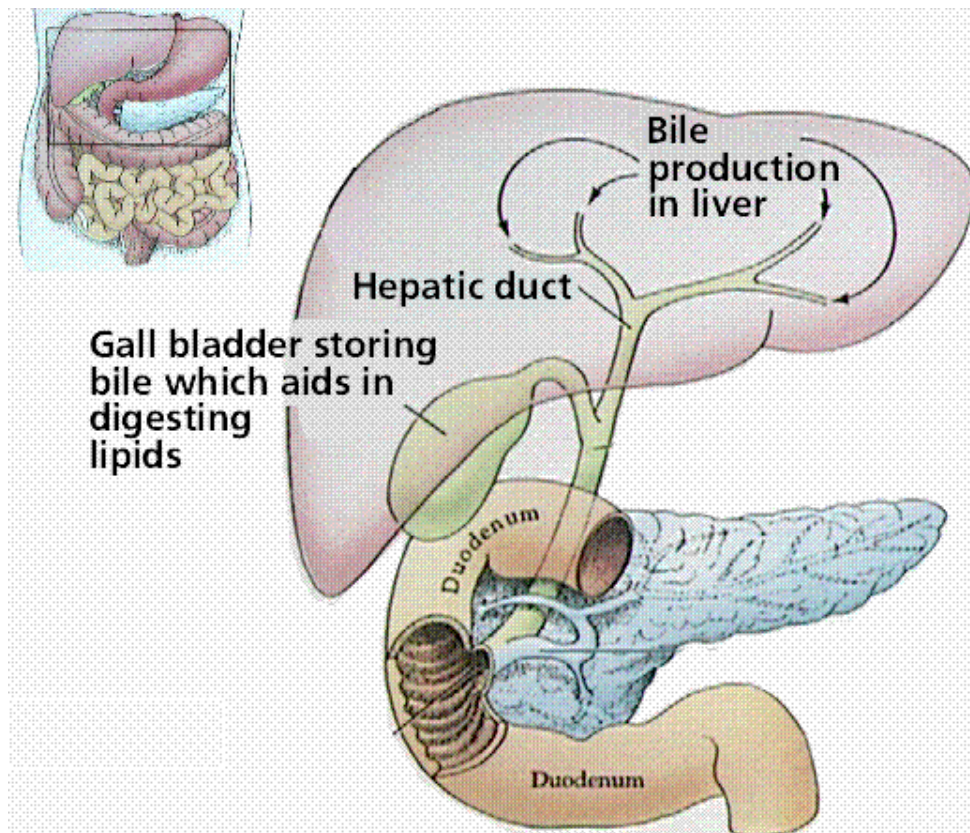
Dr. Bieler called the small intestine "the first line of the body's defense against harmful foods and poisons." When the person ingests harmful irritating foods or irritating substances are produced by the putrefaction of undigested foods the intestine will reject it. It may trigger nausea and vomiting or diarrhea or both. In a typical case of Staphylococcal food poisoning bacteria grow in the food and release a toxin. Within one to six hours after ingestion the person has acute nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and diarrhea. The episode usually resolves in less than 12 hours.

More commonly a person discovers certain foods that disagree with him. Overeating in general and too much of a particular food may cause the

### The Digestive System



intestines to reject it. We should carefully observe the cause the intestines to reject it. We should carefully observe the beneficial and adverse effects of the different type of food we eat. Arnold Ehret noted that in the transition diet when there is much waste material in the intestines, the body may not tolerate fresh fruit. The sugar in the fruit mixing with the intestinal waste leads to fermentation and gas.



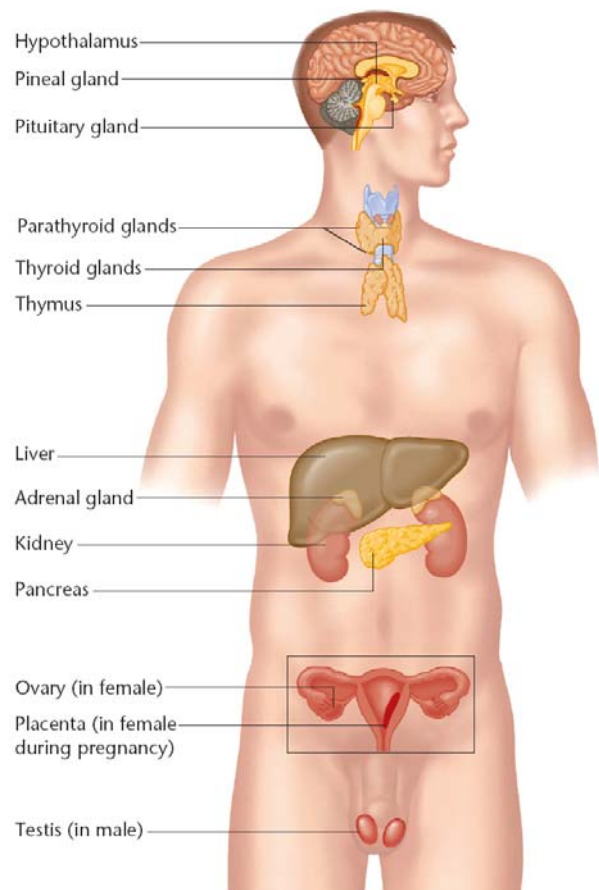
The portal vein brings blood from the intestines to the liver, The liver functions as the central chemical laboratory The liver synthesizes materials such as albumin and clotting factors. It prepares fuel for oxidation and energy. It also stores excess nourishment for future use. The liver stores sugar in the form of glycogen. It converts amino acids into sugar. It produces urea from the breakdown of protein. It produces cholesterol and bile salts. It also transforms chemical compounds into substances ready for excretion through the bile. Many drugs are metabolized and excreted by the liver.

Dr. Bieler calls the liver the body's "second line of defense against disease". His view of the liver is very interesting. A large part of the liver's role is neutralizing acid. Acid is defined as the hydrogen ion  $H^+$ . When hydrochloric acid ( $H^+ Cl^-$ ) is neutralized by sodium bicarbonate ( $Na^+ HCO_3^-$ ) the product is sodium chloride ( $Na^+ Cl^-$ ), water ( $H_2O$ ) and carbon dioxide ( $CO_2$ ). Water is excreted in the urine. Carbon dioxide is expired out by the lungs, and salt is a major mineral content of the blood.

Dr. Bieler observed that the liver is one of the largest reservoirs of sodium in the body. He observed that when the liver is depleted of sodium its capacity to neutralize acid is inhibited. When the liver cannot filter out these substances they spill over into the blood stream and cause disease. Normally bile is clear bright yellow. It is alkaline in reaction and non-irritating to the tissues. When the liver has not been able to neutralize the acids, the bile becomes dark green or black. It is acidic and has a corrosive effect on tissue. Acid bile causes inflammation of the liver, bile ducts, and gall bladder. Toxic bile in the intestines can cause burning and vomiting.

One of Dr. Bieler's patients was a 35 year-old man who felt weak and dizzy. He had nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite. The blood test showed liver inflammation. He was placed on bed rest with a 5 day fast of vegetable broth. At the end of this time he was able to assimilate food. Dr. Bieler points out that food and nutrition are not the same thing. "Man is nourished not by the food he eats but only in proportion to what he is able to digest and assimilate." [Food is Your Best Medicine (Ballantine Books, New York, 1992) p. 67.]

In Dr. Bieler's model, the endocrine glands are the "third line of defense against disease." Dr. Bieler is talking about the pituitary, thyroid, and adrenal glands. The pituitary is located in the head behind the eyes. It monitors hormone concentrations in the blood and secretes hormones which stimulate the thyroid and adrenal glands. The thyroid gland is in the neck. Under the stimulation of the pituitary it secretes the hormone thyroxine. Thyroxine controls the speed of our metabolism. The adrenal glands are located above the kidneys. They also receive stimulation from the pituitary. They secrete cortisol and aldosterone. Cortisol helps the body regulate the production of glucose for fuel. It stimulates the conversion of protein into sugar and helps raise the level of blood sugar by opposing insulin. Aldosterone controls the retention of salt by the kidney and helps expand the volume of blood.



Dr. Bieler's theory is that the endocrine system guards the body and helps eliminate waste material when the bowels and liver are overwhelmed. The

pituitary is the "watchdog". When the pituitary detects an abnormality in the blood it can direct the thyroid and adrenal glands to respond. Dr. Bieler says: "In emergencies the thyroid will direct elimination through the skin and the mucous and serous membranes; the adrenals will direct elimination through the kidneys and bowels." (p. 73).

At the time Dr. Bieler wrote "Food Is Your Best Medicine" he did not have as complete a picture of the endocrine and immune systems as we do today. Some of the functions ascribed to the endocrine system may really be done by the immune system.

Dr. Bieler is viewing the body from a perspective which suggests the body is purposeful in defending itself against disease. It is not a concept expressed in modern medical textbooks. However when you think about it, it makes sense. When a person has asthma, the body is secreting an overload of mucus into the lungs. The modern treatment for asthma is adrenal corticosteroids. The steroids help relieve the asthma by suppressing the immune system and reducing inflammation in the lungs. Again in skin diseases like eczema and psoriasis steroid creams are applied to the skin to reduce inflammation and itching.

Dr. Bieler also observed how the balance between the endocrine glands affects the health of the person. When the adrenal gland is predominant the person tends to have high energy. The hands and feet are warm. The muscles are strong. When the thyroid gland is predominant the person's nervous system is sensitive. The heart beat tends to be rapid. The person is frequently fatigued. He may have insomnia. Dr. Bieler did not give a detailed description of the person with a dominant pituitary gland.

From the viewpoint of Modern Medicine, Dr. Bieler's model is simplistic and incomplete. For that matter, so is Arnold Ehret's model. Yet both Dr. Bieler and Arnold Ehret are saying that the body has intrinsic wisdom and has the capacity to heal itself if we let it. We recognize that each of us have genetic strengths and limitations. We are vulnerable to various types of illnesses. If we fill our intestines with junk our intestines will initially rebel. If we persist in overloading the intestines with unnecessary food, the liver will take up the battle. When the liver is overwhelmed the endocrine glands and immune system can cooperate in trying to eliminate the waste. The disease may be acute, like a cold, pneumonia, a rash, or diarrhea. The disease may be chronic like allergic rhinitis, asthma, psoriasis, or ulcerative colitis. Whatever the disease, both Ehret and Bieler recommend returning to the basics of healing: fasting, eating wisely, and allowing the body to eliminate waste.

Next time we will look at Dr. Bieler's insight into some common illnesses.

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*About the author...*

Dr. David L. Duffy, MD graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1971. He trained in Internal Medicine and Ambulatory Care at Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, NY, from 1971 - 1975. He continued seeing patients and supervising interns and residents at the Montefiore Medic Clinic until 1980. From 1981-1988 he had a private medical practice in Oceanside, California. In 1988 he returned to New York to work at Metropolitan Hospital Center in Manhattan. From 1996 to 2005 he served as Section Chief of General Internal Medicine. He also served as Chairman of the Patient Education Committee from 1999 to 2005. His medical office is located at 27-10 30th Avenue, Suite LA, Astoria, NY 11102. Astoria is in a section of Queens County, NY a part of New York City. Dr. Duffy is only available by appointment. Dr. Duffy can be reached by phone at 718-932-9870. Dr. Duffy will not be available for phone, fax, mail or e-mail consultations.

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The Ehret Literature Publishing Company, Inc  
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Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522-0024



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