

# Healthmonitor

## Don't Let A Digestion Disorder Keep You From Exercising

by Mirabai Holland, MFA



### **Getting in shape improves general health and quality**

**of life.** But if your digestive disorder has you thinking exercise is out of the question, consider this: the right kind of moderate exercise can stimulate the digestive system to help get things moving and even soothe the GI tract. A light stroll for instance, improves circulation, raises the breathing rate and gently stimulates the contraction of the digestive muscles (peristalsis) to help food move out of the stomach and through the intestines. Slow dynamic movements like Tai Chi have a similar effect.

Certain Yoga postures and stretches are designed specifically to aid digestion without irritating the digestive organs. Breathing and relaxation techniques have a soothing effect and relieve stress that can interrupt digestion.

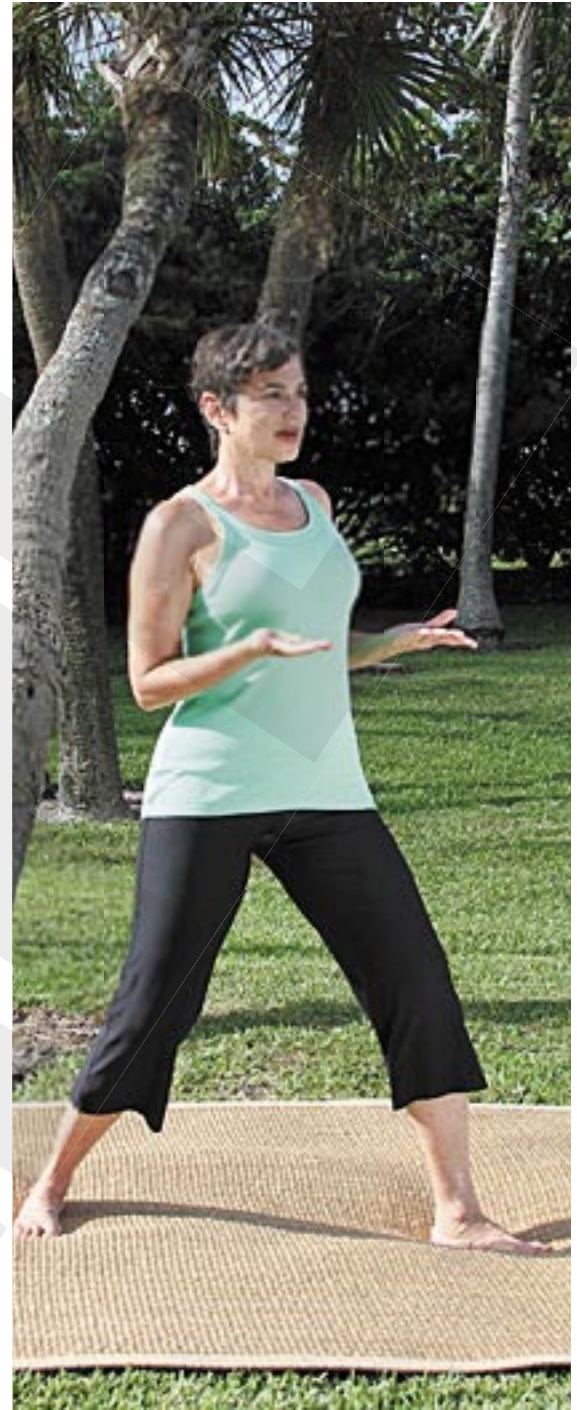
#### Dos and Don'ts

Do light exercise most days of the week. Build up to at least 30 minutes.

Avoid high intensity, high impact exercises like running. Studies suggest this type of exercise can aggravate gastric problems.

Wait two hours after eating before exercising.

Consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program.



## TAI CHI SWEEP

Stand in a wide position knees slightly bent, torso turned left, hands on either side of your waist, palms up. Stretch arms out and sweep them around in a semicircle till you're facing right. Pull hands back to your waist. Extend and sweep around to the left and pull back.

Alternate sweeping left and right for 4 reps.

Sooths the nervous system. Stimulates action of digestive muscles (Peristalsis).



## BACK EXTENSION

Lie face down, hands on the floor shoulder width apart about head height. Keeping hips on the floor slowly raise your torso until your arms are almost straight. Breath normally. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Lower to starting position. 3 reps. Increases blood flow to the GI tract and stimulates peristalsis



## SEATED TORSO TWIST

Sit erect cross-legged. Place your right hand on the floor in front of you and slowly turn to the left twisting the torso gently. Support the position by placing your left hand on the ground behind your back. Breathe normally. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Alternate sides. 2 reps each side. Stimulates and massages the digestive organs including liver and kidneys.



## SOOTHING DIAPHRAGM BREATHING

Sit cross-legged, balancing on both sit bones, back erect. Hands are resting on knees, palms up. Close your eyes and slowly inhale through the nose. Relax your abs letting the diaphragm move down to help the lungs fill with air. Hold the inhale for 3 seconds. Slowly exhale through the mouth while contracting your abs. The diaphragm will move up and help expel the breath more fully. Repeat and hold for 4 seconds. Build up to holding for ten seconds adding 1 second at a time. Diaphragmatic breathing has a soothing effect on the digestive organs. The rhythmic movement of the diaphragm and the filling and emptying of the lungs massage the GI tract.

The relaxation that comes from slow deliberate breathing has a calming effect on the nervous system reducing stress and further relaxing the organs.

Mirabai Holland M.F.A. legendary fitness pioneer, specializes in preventive and rehabilitative exercise. Her Moving Free® approach to exercise is designed to provide a movement experience so pleasant it doesn't feel like work. For more info please visit [www.movingfree.com](http://www.movingfree.com)