

## Glossary

**bolus** - a mass of food moving through the digestive tract.

**chemical digestion** - the process by which food is chemically broken down by digestive enzymes.

**chyme** - partly digested food that exits the stomach to the intestine.

**digestive tract** - also referred to as the alimentary canal. Extending from the mouth to the rectum, it is where food is digested.

**enzyme** - acts as a biological catalyst to increase the rate of a chemical reaction.

**esophagus** - the muscular tube through which food passes from the pharynx into the stomach.

**gastroesophageal reflux** - a medical condition caused by the faulty functioning of the lower esophageal sphincter, where stomach acid moves up into the esophagus.

**intestine** - a segment of the digestive tract that extends from the stomach to the rectum.

**lower sphincter** - a ring-shaped muscle that opens to allow the food entry to the stomach and closes again to prevent food from moving back into the esophagus.

**mechanical digestion** - the process by which food is physically broken down into smaller pieces.

**nasal passage** - an air-filled cavity that connects the nose to the trachea.

**peristaltic contractions** - muscular contractions which push food down the esophagus.

**pharynx** - the cavity between the mouth and the esophagus that controls the passage of food and air. The presence of food in the pharynx results in the act of swallowing.

**saliva** - produced by the salivary gland. Saliva serves as a lubricant and contains salivary amylase.

**salivary amylase** - a salivary enzyme which initiates the process of chemical digestion.

**salivary gland** - an organ found in the mouth which secretes saliva.

**stomach** - the principal organ where food is digested. Stomach muscles contract every few seconds, stirring up the gastric acid which turns food into a thick liquid called chyme.

**rectum** - the final segment of the digestive tract, where depleted food exits the body.

**teeth** - used to mechanically digest food through biting and chewing. Some teeth cut, while others grind.

**tongue** - assists in mechanical digestion by moving food around in the mouth, and facilitates the acts of chewing and swallowing.

**trachea** - an airway that connects the nasal passage to the lungs.

**upper sphincter** - a ring-shaped muscle located between the mouth and the esophagus that opens only when food is swallowed.