

The bowel

The bowel is part of your digestive system. It's made up of the small bowel (small intestine) and the large bowel. The diagram shows the parts of the body that make up the digestive system.

1 Mouth

Food and liquid enter the body through the mouth. Chewing breaks down the food.

2 Oesophagus

Carries the food and liquid to the stomach for digestion.

3 Stomach

Stores and breaks down the food into a liquid mixture before slowly releasing it into the small bowel.

4 Liver

Produces bile, which helps the body absorb fat from food.

5 Gallbladder

Stores bile until the body needs it.

6 Pancreas

Produces enzymes (substances that speed up chemical reactions) that help the body digest fat, protein and carbohydrates (starchy foods).

7 Small bowel

Breaks the food down even further, absorbing the nutrients into the body. Undigested waste moves into the colon. Cancer that affects the small bowel is called small bowel cancer.

8 Large bowel

Made up of the colon (8A) and rectum (8B). The body absorbs water from the undigested waste as it moves along the colon towards the rectum. Waste (poo) is stored in the rectum until it passes out of the body. Cancer that affects the large bowel is called bowel cancer. You may also hear it called colorectal cancer, colon cancer or rectum cancer, depending on where it's found.

9 Anus

Poo passes through the anus as it leaves the body.

