

United European Gastroenterology (UEG) is a professional non-profit organisation combining all the leading European medical specialist and national societies focusing on digestive health. It acts as the united and trusted voice of European gastroenterology and is recognised as the leading authority on digestive health across Europe promoting science, research, education, quality of care and reduced health inequalities.

Digestive Health Deserves Attention:

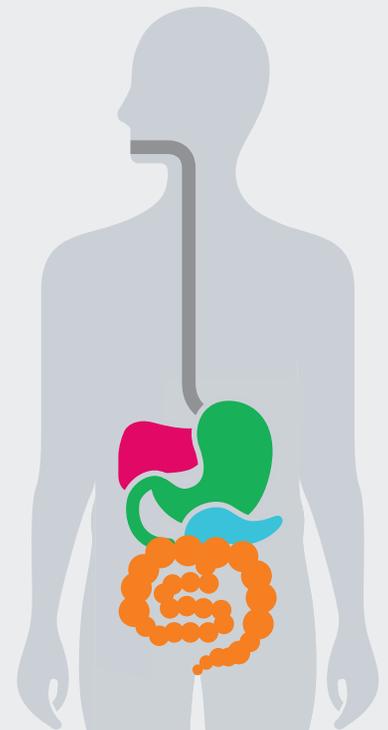
Digestive diseases are long-term disorders of the digestive tract and include; digestive cancers, chronic liver diseases, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), coeliac disease, food allergies and functional disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

The Burden of Chronic Digestive Diseases:

Chronic digestive diseases continuously inflict a heavy healthcare and socio-economic burden throughout Europe. They often affect patients at a younger age and these lifelong disorders, such as IBS, which affects more than one in ten people, can have a significant impact on society¹. Digestive diseases result in a loss of economic productivity through both physical and mental burdens. IBD, for example, affects 3 million people across Europe and costs the EU up to €5.6 billion per year².

The high levels of alcohol consumption, increasing levels of obesity and poor nutritional choices across Europe are predicted to worsen, suggesting that the burden is only going to become greater unless attitudes and lifestyles change. Chronic liver disease is currently estimated to affect almost 30 million people in the EU and, due to these lifestyle choices and attitudes, these figures are estimated to increase³.

There is evidence that many chronic digestive diseases are preventable. Leading an active lifestyle, making healthy nutritional choices, receiving birth-dose vaccinations for viral hepatitis and undertaking screening for digestive cancers can all reduce the risk of chronic digestive diseases.



Calls to Policymakers:

- Support a greater emphasis on health in the 2019-24 mandate. Health and well-being are the cornerstones of strong and sustainable societies and economies.
- Recognise the socio-economic burden of digestive diseases.
- Support enhanced initiatives on viral hepatitis under EU actions on communicable diseases.
- Increase funding for the prevention and management of digestive diseases and their impact upon health systems.
- Build a comprehensive EU strategy on chronic diseases.
- Create policies and actions to secure equal access to prevention and treatment of digestive diseases, particularly in regards to improved quality and standards of care across Europe.



Nutrition: An Unhealthy Trend

- Diet is one of the most important factors in the **development and prevention of cancer, obesity and other digestive diseases**. A diet rich in fruit and vegetables can significantly reduce risk¹.
- Colorectal cancer risk **increases by 28%** for every **120g of red meat** eaten per day².
- A high consumption of salt has been linked with stomach cancer, of which there are approximately **80,000 diagnosed cases** within the EU every year³.
- Processed food is a major trigger for chronic digestive diseases⁴.

Calls to Policymakers:

1. Implement new initiatives and policies that incentivise healthy diets and lifestyles, starting in childhood.
2. Tackle aggressive food marketing and take action to reduce salt, saturated fats and sugar in processed foods.
3. Increase support for actions such as the recent legislation introducing an EU-wide legal limit on industrial trans-fats in food.
4. Ensure that food reformulation is based on scientific evidence.

Alcohol: A Sobering Reality

- The European region has the **highest level of alcohol consumption** in the world⁵.
- **25% of deaths** from gastrointestinal diseases are directly attributed to alcohol⁶.
- Alcohol-related harm results in **€74 billion** of lost annual productivity across the EU⁷.
- Alcohol abuse accounts for up to **half of all liver cancer cases** in Europe⁸, as well as liver cirrhosis.

Calls to Policymakers:

1. Develop new proposals and schemes to reduce alcohol consumption.
2. Prioritise protection from excessive alcohol consumption, including the prevention of aggressive marketing.
3. Renew the EU alcohol policy and deliver on a regulatory approach to labelling (a voluntary approach will not work).
4. Relaunch the EU Alcohol and Health Forum.

Digestive Cancers: A Growing Threat

- Digestive cancers are responsible for **28% of cancer related deaths** in the EU⁹.
- Estimated deaths from digestive cancers across the EU will be **over 515,000 by 2035**¹⁰.
- Despite being the only cancer that has seen **no improvement in survival rates for 40 years**, pancreatic cancer receives **less than 2%** of all cancer research funding in Europe¹¹.
- Colorectal cancer is **the second biggest cancer killer** in Europe and has a significant economic burden, costing the EU **€13 billion per year**¹².

Calls to Policymakers:

1. Support initiatives on digestive cancer, within the remit of “The Innovative Partnership on Action against Cancer” and similar undertakings.
2. Prioritise the implementation of standardised population-based and quality-controlled screening programmes for colorectal cancer in all Member States.
3. Ensure that there are regular updates of colorectal cancer screening guidelines and screening progress reports every two years, which reflects the scientific evidence from current best practice.
4. Increase funding for pancreatic cancer research, improved data collection and the development of pancreatic cancer registries.



A 10% increase in processed food consumption is associated with a 10 percent increase in cancer risk¹³



25% of gastrointestinal diseases are directly attributed to alcohol¹⁴



Digestive cancers are responsible for 28% of cancer deaths in the EU¹⁵