



Tummy Tunes and Belly Butterflies

Growling belly before dinner? Rumbling tum afterwards?

What's going on down there in the depths of you digestive system?

Let's have a listen and find out...

You will need

- A microphone attached to a speaker or tape recorder, or a medical stethoscope
- A willing volunteer

Steps

1. Hold the stethoscope near to the volunteer's belly – the best times are just before or shortly after a meal.
2. If you listen carefully you should be able hear some interesting noises.

Follow-up

The technical term for the noises you'll hear is **borborygmi** – which is an example of onomatopoeia, or a word that sounds like the noises it describes.

A rumbling tummy is caused by the muscles around your stomach and intestines contracting, squeezing gases such as methane and trapped air through the fleshy tubes.

This is particularly noticeable at times when there's no food in your system – such as before dinner.

After eating, you may hear sloshing noises from your belly. This is the sound of liquid food being pushed through the digestive system by the muscles we mentioned earlier.

These muscular waves are called **peristalsis**. You can demonstrate this with a long sock or a pair of tights, plus a tennis ball. Cut the end of the sock off, and place the ball into the sock. Wrap your hand around the sock, above the ball, and then pull slowly downwards. The ball will be squeezed through the sock – just like the food is squeezed through the gut by the muscles.

Some foods – such as beans, cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli – produce a lot of gas in your system.

Gases are released when the remains of foods that we can't digest particularly well are broken down by bacteria in the gut. The more food available, the more the bacteria multiply, and the more gas is released – as is the case with veggies.