

18/MHSO6/009

THE SMALL INTESTINE

Chyme released from the stomach enters the small intestine, which is the primary digestive organ in the body. Not only is this where most digestion occurs, it is also where practically all absorption occurs. The longest part of the alimentary canal, the small intestine is about 3.05 meters (10 feet) long in a living person (but about twice as long in a cadaver due to the loss of muscle tone). Since this makes it about five times longer than the large intestine, you might wonder why it is called “small

The coiled tube of the small intestine is subdivided into three regions. From proximal (at the stomach) to distal, these are the duodenum, jejunum, and ileum.

THE LARGE INTESTINE

The large intestine is the terminal part of the alimentary canal. The primary function of this organ is to finish absorption of nutrients and water, synthesize certain vitamins, form feces, and eliminate feces from the body.

STRUCTURE

The large intestine runs from the appendix to the anus. It frames the small intestine on three sides. Despite its being about one-half as long as the small intestine, it is called large because it is more than twice the diameter of the small intestine, about 3 inches.

SUBDIVISIONS

The large intestine is subdivided into four main regions: the cecum, the colon, the rectum, and the anus. The ileocecal valve, located at the opening between the ileum and the large intestine, controls the flow of chyme from the small intestine to the large intestine.