

to avoid a certain food, medications can be given to assist with the digestion of the meal. One example is Lactaid, which is used in patients who are lactose intolerant to enable them to tolerate milk products. Patients with cystic fibrosis do not produce digestive enzymes in quantities sufficient to digest any food. Therefore, they require digestive enzymes (Enzymatic Digestant Oral) with every meal and snack that they ingest.

### Mouthwashes and Other Oral Treatments

Mouthwashes or mouth rinses are used to decrease **halitosis** (bad breath) or **stomatitis** (inflammation of the mouth). Fluoride preparations can prevent tooth decay by hardening the tooth enamel. They are prescribed in tablets, drops, or mouth rinses. For a patient who does not produce saliva, saliva substitutes are prescribed. Oral topical anesthetics can be used for teething pain and mouth ulcers. Hydrogen peroxide is available OTC and acts as a weak antibacterial agent in the mouth. Dentifrices or toothpastes are used to clean teeth, decrease plaque, and prevent gum disease. Some have whitening elements as well.

## S U M M A R Y

- For the gastrointestinal (GI), or digestive, system to function optimally, it is important to understand how the food we eat and drink affects it. Sometimes, what we consume can cause illness, pain, or discomfort.
- The GI system consists of the alimentary canal, which is responsible for the four major functions of the digestive system: ingestion, digestion, absorption, and excretion.
- Digestion is the process of converting food into chemical substances used by the body. Hydrochloric acid (HCl) in the stomach helps it break down food for absorption in the small intestine.
- The GI system is vulnerable to bacterial and parasitic infection.
- GI medications work to increase or decrease function by changing the muscle tone, replacing deficient enzymes, or increasing or decreasing the emptying time or rate of passage through the system.
- The timing of GI medication administration is important for proper action or absorption.
- GI medications have diverse purposes, including, but not limited to, coating the stomach, relieving nausea and vomiting, inducing vomiting, reducing acid in the stomach, protecting teeth, killing microbes, promoting good nutrition, reducing diarrhea and constipation, suppressing the appetite, and reducing gas.