



Figure 11.1. Two levels of digestion in the human intestine. Human enzymes and transport proteins mediate digestion and absorption of digestible compounds from the small intestine. Flow rate is rapid, and bacteria are mostly adherent. In the colon, bacterial enzymes ferment plant- and host-derived polysaccharides. The resulting fermentation products are absorbed by the colonic mucosal cells and used as a source of carbon and energy. Transit time is measured in days rather than hours, and bacteria are packed in the lumen, trapped in the mucin layer, or adhered to mucosal cells.